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# PRINCIPLES *of* PREACHING

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# PRINCIPLES *of* PREACHING

A TEXTBOOK, BASED ON THE INDUCTIVE METHOD, FOR CLASS USE AND PRIVATE STUDY

*By*

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## PREFACE

This is designed to be a textbook in which the principles of preaching are drawn from an inductive study of typical sermons, and the results are formulated with reference to the needs of the world today. The sermons which are used as the sources of the study are not those that are popularly called "great." Adapting a phrase in current and sanctioned use, we may call them "sermons of power." They have been chosen primarily because of the homiletical method apparent in them and to cover a wide range of thought and temper. The evangelistic and pastoral, the dogmatic and hortatory, types are represented.

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDY

This book is divided into two parts:

I. Materials for study and criticism.

II. The findings or conclusions derived from an inductive study of Part I, setting forth the principles of preaching.

In Part I eight sermons are printed, with introductory and explanatory notes. It is important that some idea of the personality and work of the preacher should be gained in order that it may always be apparent that the sermon is the product of truth and personality. Each of these sermons was preached by a man intensely alive, facing problems similar to those that engage the modern preacher. We need constantly to renew this sense of the vitality of preaching; therefore we never divorce the sermon from the preacher.

The method of study is inductive, following the procedure of a literary laboratory.

The Work Sheet, printed on pages xiii–xvii, is to be followed exactly in the study of each sermon. It is the uniform guide for all the work done in Part I and must be referred to constantly.

The following directions are to be carried out in each Study:

1. Use a separate sheet or card, of uniform size, for the report on each item bearing a Roman numeral in the Work Sheet. Do not report on more than one item on any one sheet or card.

Each sheet or card is to be headed with the Roman numeral, the name of the preacher, and the item. For example:

I. Robertson. Impression

(Written report) _____

_____

_____

2. Preserve each sheet or card thus numbered and containing the full report of the work done under each head. This will furnish the material for the inductive study to be done in Part II. For example, when the work in Part I is complete, eight sheets or cards will be available for the study of "IV. Text," and each sheet or card will enable one to refer at once to the page of the sermon studied.

3. Do not fail to make every citation in the reports by page and line. This is imperative. Always indicate the divisions exactly in the analysis of a sermon.

4. Study the Notes printed after each sermon. These are always given according to the Roman numerals that indicate the items of the Work Sheet.

5. The thoroughness and accuracy of the critical study and reports, according to the instructions of the Work Sheet, will determine the worth of the findings in Part II. This is a textbook for serious study, and its value will be conditioned entirely upon the hard work done by the one who uses it.

## WORK SHEET

### I. Impression

Sermons are oral addresses; therefore the best way in which to restore them from their printed to their spoken form is to read them aloud, at one sitting, using the imagination to make real the preacher, the place, and the responsive congregation.

After reading the sermon aloud, write the general impression made upon you, comparing it with the effect of other sermons already studied, or with those that you have heard or read elsewhere.

In what respects would this sermon meet the needs of the congregation with which you are most familiar today? How would it fail? What modifications do you suggest?

### II. Analysis

Make an analysis of the sermon to discover its plan, indicating at least the major and first minor points. Use the following scheme, and *do not fail to indicate all divisions by page and line.*

SCHEME FOR SERMON ANALYSIS

Introduction

A.

B.

C.

(It will seldom be necessary to carry out the analysis of the Introduction to details; but use capital letters if required)

I. First major point. State and give pages and lines.

A. First minor point

B. Second minor point

C. Third minor point

II. Second major point

A. First minor point
B. Second minor point
C. Third minor point
Continue the analysis according to this scheme.

Conclusion

A.
B.
C.

III. **Title**

Does it describe the contents? Is it clear? Interesting? Easily remembered? Suggest improvement, if any desirable.

IV. **Text**

Sentence, clause, phrase, or word?
Literal meaning preserved?
Correct explanation given?

V. **Subject**

Formally announced? Where?
If not, state it.
Differs from title? How?
Differs from text? How?
Interesting? Vital? Worth discussion?

VI. **Proposition**

How and where stated?
Interesting? Clear? Concise?
If not stated, where implied?
State it in your own terms.

VII. **Introduction**

Clearly defined? Formally announced?

Leads into discussion? How?

Too long? Too short? Suggest changes.

Character of first sentence: Arrests attention? Creates interest?

Suggest changes.

VIII. **Conclusion**

Clearly defined? Formally announced?

Character: Resumptive? Hortatory? Oratorical? Appealing for decision?

Suggest changes.

IX. **Plan**

Is the subject or proposition carefully developed?

Is the plan announced? If so, how? If not, is there a sense of the plan that impresses you?

Does the discussion make progress?

Does each point: Add to the preceding? Merely accent it? Weaken it?

Where is the climax reached and how attained?

What is the proportion of each sermon part? Estimate this from the analysis and determine the balance.

X. **Sources of Material**

Note the sources from which the material is derived and estimate the amounts roughly under the following and other groups:

| | Per Cent |
|---|---|
| Results of preacher's own thinking..... | |
| Bible interpretations and quotations..... | |
| History and literature..... | |
| Observation of contemporary life..... | |

### XI. Illustrations

List and locate all the illustrations in the sermon, either on a separate sheet or on $3 \times 5$ inch cards. In the latter case, using the same card for a subject and noting the illustrations drawn from that subject in all the sermons studied, the material for the final study of illustration will be quickly available. Such a card would be like the following:

> LIGHT
>
> 1. A morning ray touching the mist.
> Robertson, p. 10, ll. 191, 192
> 2. The day that brings no dawn. Light and darkness.
> Bushnell, p. 24, l. 129—p. 25, l. 142
> 3. The study of light at morning, noon, and evening.
> Brooks, p. 44, ll. 46–51
> 4. Noble characters like lights.
> Brooks, p. 46, ll. 124–27

Are any: Old or trite? Dull or commonplace? Inaccurate or untrue? Too detailed?

What is the best example in the sermon and why is it an effective illustration?

### XII. Transitions

Study the way in which the preacher passes from one paragraph to another. List the terms used to connect the thought. Note where the change is abrupt and imagine in what way the feeling of lack of unity might have been avoided by the delivery, e.g., a gesture.

Does the preacher: Move across logically? Jump over? Leave you suspended?

### XIII. Unity

Is there a single purpose carried through the sermon?

Is there a single subject logically developed?

Is the style consistently unified throughout?

If there are faults under any of the foregoing questions, name and locate them.

### XIV. Style

Study the writer's style and give an example of each of the following qualities; also cite fully any fault under each heading:

Purity
Precision
Clearness
Energy
Beauty
Naturalness
Individuality

Before working this section it will be necessary to get the definition of the foregoing terms as given on pages 255–60.

### XV. General Observations

Is the purpose of this sermon to state the gospel to those who have not heard it; or to restate it to those who have heard it?

Does this sermon contain a positive message?

What particular devices does the preacher use to make the truth vivid and easy to be remembered?

Give sentences worth memorizing or filing in addition to those given in XIV above.

# PART I

## SERMON STUDIES

# SERMON STUDY I

## ROBERTSON, "OBEDIENCE THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE"

### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Frederick W. Robertson, Anglican, who exerted as great an influence after his death upon the English-speaking pulpit as any man in the history of preaching, was only thirty-seven years old when he died and his term of active service in the pulpit was about thirteen years. He has been called the "most remarkable English preacher of the nineteenth century." He was born in 1816 and died in 1853. His desire was to follow the tradition of his family and prepare for military service; but when no door opened in the line of his ambition he studied theology and entered the church. The last six years of his life were spent in Brighton; he is often known as "Robertson of Brighton." His deep influence was somewhat due to the good fortune by which Rev. Stopford A. Brooke became his biographer and certain friends transcribed and published his sermons. Robertson is still worthy of careful study as a master of preaching.

The methods by which Robertson worked are explained by him as follows:

The word *extempore* does not exactly describe the way I preach. I first make copious notes; then draw out a form (rough plan); afterwards write copiously, sometimes twice or thrice, the thoughts, to disentangle them and arrange

them into a connected whole; then make a syllabus, and, lastly, a skeleton which I take into the pulpit.[1]

The sermons themselves, as noted in the original edition,

are not notes previously prepared, nor are they Sermons written before delivery. They are simply "Recollections": sometimes dictated by the Preacher himself to the younger members of a family in which he was interested, at their urgent entreaty; sometimes written out by himself for them when they were at a distance and unable to attend his ministry.[2]

Therefore, Robertson's sermons furnish an example of pulpit discourses in their simplest forms and are admirably suited to introduce the student of the principles of preaching to the study of sermons themselves as the primary source of investigation.

In addition to the volume of Sermons referred to in the footnote, the best source for further study is *Life, Letters, Lectures and Addresses of Frederick W. Robertson, M.A., Incumbent of Trinity Chapel, Brighton, 1847–1853.* The first section of this complete volume, published in New York by Harper & Bros. in 1870, is the excellent biography by Stopford A. Brooke.

[1] Quoted in Currier, *Nine Great Preachers*, 1912, p. 264.

[2] Robertson, *Sermons Preached at Brighton*, p. v. New York: Harper, 1870. The sermon which follows is taken from pp. 300–307.

## OBEDIENCE THE ORGAN OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

*Assize Sermon*

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John 7:17.

The first thing we have to do is to put ourselves in possession of the history of these words.

Jesus taught in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews marvelled at His spiritual wisdom. The cause of wonder was the want of scholastic education: "How knoweth this man letters, never having learned?" They had no conception of any source of wisdom beyond learning.

He Himself gave a different account of the matter. "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." And how He came possessed of it, speaking humanly, He taught (John 5:30): "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

That principle whereby He attained spiritual judgment or wisdom, He extends to all. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Here, then, manifestly, there are two opinions respecting the origin of spiritual knowledge:

1. The popular one of the Jews, relying on a cultivated understanding.

2. The principle of Christ, which relied on trained affections, and habits of obedience.

What is truth? "Study," said the Jews. "Act," said Christ, "and you shall know." A very precious principle to hold by in these days, and a very pregnant one of thought to us, who during the next few days must be engaged in the contemplation of crime, and to whom the question will suggest itself, how can men's lives be made true?

Religious controversy is fast settling into a conflict between two great extreme parties—those who believe every-

thing, and those who believe nothing: the disciples of credulity, and the disciples of skepticism.

The first rely on authority. Foremost among these, and the only self-consistent ones, are the adherents of the Church of Rome; and into this body, by logical consistency, ought to merge all—Dissenters, Churchmen, Bible Christians; all who receive their opinions because their sect, their church, or their documents assert them, not because they are true eternally in themselves.

The second class rely solely on a cultivated understanding. This is the root principle of Rationalism. Enlighten, they say, and sin will disappear. Enlighten, and we shall know all that can be known of God. Sin is an error of the understanding, not a crime of the will. Illuminate the understanding, show man that sin is folly, and sin will disappear. Political economy will teach public virtue; knowledge of anatomy will arrest the indulgence of the passions. Show the drunkard the inflamed tissues of the brain, and he will be sobered by fear and reason.

Only enlighten fully, and spiritual truths will be tested. When the anatomist shall have hit on a right method of dissection, and appropriated sensation to this filament of the brain, and the religious sentiment to that fibre, we shall know whether there be a soul or not, and whether consciousness will survive physical dissolution. When the chemist shall have discovered the principle of life, and found cause behind cause, we shall know whether the last cause of all is a personal will or a lifeless force.

Concerning whom I only remark now, that these disciples of skepticism easily become disciples of credulity. It is instructive to see how they who sneer at Christian mysteries as old wives' fables bow in abject reverence before Egyptian mysteries of three thousand years' antiquity; and how they who have cast off a God believe in the veriest imposture, and have blind faith in the most vulgar juggling. Skepticism

and credulity meet. Nor is it difficult to explain. Distrusting everything, they doubt their own conclusions and their own mental powers; and that for which they cannot account presents itself to them as supernatural and mysterious. Wonder makes them more credulous than those they sneer at.

In opposition to both these systems stands the Christianity of Christ.

1. Christ never taught on personal authority. "My doctrine is not mine." He taught "not as the scribes." They dogmatized: "because it was written"—stickled for maxims, and lost principles. His authority was the authority of truth, not of personality: He commanded men to believe, not because He said it, but He said it because it was true. Hence John 12:47, 48, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

2. He never taught that cultivation of the understanding would do all, but exactly the reverse. And so taught His apostles. St. Paul taught, "The world by wisdom knew not God." His Master said not that clear intellect will give you a right heart, but that a right heart and a pure life will clarify the intellect. Not, become a man of letters and learning, and you will attain spiritual freedom, but, do rightly, and you will judge justly; obey, and you will know. "My judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which sent me." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I. The knowledge of the truth, or Christian knowledge.

II. The condition on which it is attainable.

I. Christian knowledge—"he shall know." Its object, "the doctrine." Its degree—certainty—"shall *know*."

Doctrine is now, in our modern times, a word of limited meaning; being simply opposed to practical. For instance, the Sermon on the Mount would be called practical;

St. Paul's Epistles, doctrinal. But in Scripture, doctrine means broadly, teaching; anything that is taught is doctrine. Christ's doctrine embraces the whole range of His teaching—every principle and every precept. Let us select three departments of "doctrine" in which the principle of the text will be found true—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

1. It holds good in speculative truth. If any man will do God's will, he shall know what is truth and what is error. Let us see how wilfulness and selfishness hinder impartiality. How comes it that men are almost always sure to arrive at the conclusions reached by their own party? Surely because fear, interest, vanity, or the desire of being reckoned sound and judicious, or party spirit, bias them. Personal prospects, personal antipathies, these determine most men's creed. How will you remove this hindrance? By increased cultivation of mind? Why, the Romanist is as accomplished as the Protestant, and learning is found in the church and out of it. You are not sure that high mental cultivation will lead a man either to Protestantism or to the Church of England. Surely, then, by removing self-will, and so only, can the hindrance to right opinions be removed. Take away the last trace of interested feeling, and the way is cleared for men to come to an approximation toward unity, even in judgment on points speculative; and so he that will do God's will shall know of the doctrine.

2. In practical truths the principle is true. It is more true to say that our opinions depend upon our lives and habits than to say that our lives depend upon our opinions, which is only now and then true. The fact is, men think in a certain mode on these matters because their life is of a certain character, and their opinions are only invented afterwards as a defense for their life.

For instance, St. Paul speaks of a maxim among the Corinthians, "Let us eat and drink, *for* tomorrow we die." They excused their voluptuousness on the ground of its consistency with their skeptical creed. Life was short. Death came tomorrow. There was no hereafter. Therefore it was quite consistent to live for pleasure. But who does not see that the creed was the result, and not the cause of the life? Who does not see that *first* they ate and drank, and *then* believed tomorrow we die? "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." Eating and drinking, we lose sight of the life to come. When the immortal is overborne and smothered in the life of the flesh, how *can* men believe in life to come? Then disbelieving, they mistook the cause for the effect. Their moral habits and creed were in perfect consistency; yet it was the life that formed the creed, not the creed that formed the life. Because they were sensualists, immortality had become incredible.

Again, slavery is defended philosophically by some. The negro, on his skull and skeleton, they say, has God's intention of his servitude written; he is the inferior animal, therefore it is right to enslave him. Did this doctrine precede the slave-trade? Did man arrive at it, and then, in consequence, conscientiously proceed with human traffic? Or was it invented to defend a practice existing already—the offspring of self-interest? Did not men first make slaves, and then search about for reasons to make their conduct plausible to themselves?

So, too, a belief in predestination is sometimes alleged in excuse of crime. But a man who suffers his will to be overpowered naturally comes to believe that he is the sport of fate; feeling powerless, he believes that God's decree has made him so. But let him but put forth one act of loving will, and then, as the nightmare of a dream is annihilated by an effort, so the incubus of a belief in tyrannous destiny is dissipated the moment a man wills to do the will of God

Observe, how he knows the doctrine, directly he does the will.

There is another thing said respecting this knowledge of truth. It respects the degree of certainty—"he shall *know*," not he shall have an opinion. There is a wide distinction between supposing and knowing—between fancy and conviction—between opinion and belief. Whatever rests on authority remains only supposition. You have an opinion when you know what others think. You *know* when you feel. In matters practical you know only so far as you can do. Read a work on the "Evidences of Christianity," and it may become highly probable that Christianity, etc., are true. That is an opinion. Feel God, do His will, till the Absolute Imperative within you speaks as with a living voice, "Thou shalt, and thou shalt not"; and then you do not think, you *know* that there is a God. That is a conviction and a belief.

Have we never seen how a child, simple and near to God, cuts asunder a web of sophistry with a single direct question; how, before its steady look and simple argument, some fashionable utterer of a conventional falsehood has been abashed; how a believing Christian scatters the forces of skepticism, as a morning ray, touching the mist on the mountain side, makes it vanish into thin air? And there are few more glorious moments of our humanity than those in which faith does battle against intellectual proof; when, for example, after reading a skeptical book, or hearing a cold-blooded materialist's demonstration in which God, the soul, and life to come are proved impossible, up rises the heart in all the giant might of its immortality to do battle with the understanding, and with the simple argument, "I *feel* them in my best and highest moments to be true," annihilates the sophistries of logic.

These moments of profound faith do not come once for all: they vary with the degree and habit of obedience. There

is a plant which blossoms once in a hundred years. Like it, the soul blossoms only now and then in a space of years; but these moments are the glory and the heavenly glimpses of our purest humanity.

II. The condition on which knowledge of truth is attainable. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

This universe is governed by laws. At the bottom of everything here there is a law. Things are in this way and not that; we call that a law or condition. All departments have their own laws. By submission to them, you make them your own. Obey the laws of the body—such laws as say, "Be temperate and chaste"; or of the mind—such laws as say, "Fix the attention, strengthen by exercise"; and then their prizes are yours—health, strength, pliability of muscle, tenaciousness of memory, nimbleness of imagination, etc. Obey the laws of your spiritual being, and it has its prizes too. For instance, the condition or law of a peaceful life is submission to the law of meekness: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The condition of the Beatific vision is a pure heart and life: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." To the impure, God is simply invisible. The condition annexed to a sense of God's presence—in other words, that without which a sense of God's presence can not be—is obedience to the laws of love: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." The condition of spiritual wisdom and certainty in truth is obedience to the will of God, surrender of private will: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

In every department of knowledge, therefore, there is an appointed "organ," or instrument for discovery of its specific truth, and for appropriating its specific blessings. In the world of sense, the empirical intellect; in that world the

Baconian philosopher is supreme. His Novum Organon is experience; he knows by experiment of touch, sight, sound, etc. The religious man may not contravene his assertions: he is lord in his own province. But in the spiritual world, the "organ" of the scientific man—sensible experience—is powerless. If the chemist, geologist, physiologist, come back from their spheres and say, "We find in the laws of affinity, in the deposits of past ages, in the structure of the human frame, no trace nor token of a God," I simply reply, "I never expected you would." Obedience and self-surrender is the sole organ by which we gain a knowledge of that which cannot be seen or felt. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And just as by copying perpetually a master-painter's works we get at last an instinctive and infallible power of recognizing his touch, so by copying and doing God's will we recognize what is His: we know of the teaching whether it be of God, or whether it be an arbitrary invention of a human self.

2. Observe the universality of the law. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The law was true of the man Christ Jesus Himself. He tells us it is true of all other men.

In God's universe there are no favorites of heaven who may transgress the laws of the universe with impunity—none who can take fire in the hand and not be burnt—no enemies of heaven who, if they sow corn, will reap nothing but tares. The law is just and true to all: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

In God's spiritual universe there are no favorites of heaven who can attain knowledge and spiritual wisdom apart from obedience. There are none reprobate by an eternal decree, who can surrender self, and in all things submit to God, and yet fail of spiritual convictions. It is not therefore

a rare, partial condescension of God, arbitrary and causeless, which gives knowledge of the truth to some, and shuts it out from others, but a vast, universal glorious law. The light lighteth every man that cometh into the world. "If *any* man will do His will, he shall know."

See the beauty of this Divine arrangement. If the certainty of truth depended upon the proof of miracles, prophecy, or the discoveries of science, then truth would be in the reach chiefly of those who can weigh evidence, investigate history, and languages, study by experiment; whereas as it is, "The *meek* will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way." "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The humblest and weakest may know more of God, of moral evil and of good, by a single act of charity, or a prayer of self-surrender, than all the sages can teach: ay, or all the theologians can dogmatize upon.

They know nothing, perhaps, these humble ones, of the evidences, but they are sure that Christ is their Redeemer. They cannot tell what "matter" is, but they know that *they* are spirits. They know nothing of the "argument from design," but they feel God. The truths of God are spiritually discerned by them. They have never learned letters, but they have reached the Truth of Life.

3. Annexed to this condition, or a part of it, is earnestness. "If any man *will* do His will." Now, that word "will" is not the will of the future tense, but "will" meaning "volition": if any man wills, resolves, has the mind to do the will of God. So then it is not a chance fitful obedience that leads us to the truth, nor an obedience paid while happiness lasts and no longer, but an obedience rendered in entireness and in earnest. It is not written, "If any man does His will," but if any man has the spirit and desire. If we are in earnest, we shall persevere like the Syrophenician woman, even

though the ear of the universe seem deaf, and Christ Himself appear to bid us back. If we are not in earnest, difficulties will discourage us. Because will is wanting, we shall be asking still in ignorance and doubt, What is truth?

All this will seem to many people time misspent. They go to church because it is the custom, and all Christians believe it is the established religion. But there are hours, and they come to us all at some period of life or other, when the hand of Mystery seems to lie heavy on the soul—when some life-shock scatters existence, leaves it a blank and dreary waste henceforth forever, and there appears nothing of hope in all the expanse which stretches out, except that merciful gate of death which opens at the end—hours when the sense of misplaced or ill-requited affection, the feeling of personal worthlessness, the uncertainty and meanness of all human aims, and the doubt of all human goodness, unfix the soul from all its old moorings, and leave it drifting, drifting over the vast infinitude, with an awful sense of solitariness. Then the man whose faith rested on outward authority and not on inward life, will find it give way: the authority of the priest, the authority of the Church, or merely the authority of a document proved by miracles and backed by prophecy, the soul—conscious life hereafter—God—will be an awful desolate Perhaps. Well, in such moments you doubt all—whether Christianity be true: whether Christ was man, or God, or a beautiful fable. You ask bitterly, like Pontius Pilate, What is truth? In such an hour what remains? I reply, Obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest; force yourself to abound in little services; try to do good to others; be true to the duty that you know. *That* must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left to doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you, and "You shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—Does the sermon "grip" you by convincing your mind, arousing your feelings, or moving you to action?

If so, what factor in the sermon best accomplishes this result? How?

II. **Analysis.**—In seeking the analysis of the sermon we observe:

A. The bald announcement of points by I and II, especially at page 11, line 208. This would not be possible in the spoken sermon. Therefore Robertson must have used some such words as these: "We pass, therefore, to consider the condition on which knowledge of Christian truth is obtained." In order to secure finish and smoothness should sermon points be announced? Suggest other formulas.

B. At page 8, line 103, Robertson says that he will select *three* departments of doctrine for discussion. He then treats "speculative" and "practical" truths, but he does not take up a third department.

How do you account for this?

Is it a serious omission?

C. In discussing II we find that he places the Arabic number 2 at page 12, line 258, but no preceding 1 appears.

Should this be supplied before "This universe is governed by laws"? Page 11, line 211.

If not, where? Or may it be omitted?

In the light of these omissions, is this a satisfactory plan? Or is the work carelessly done?

III. **Title.**—What is meant by an "organ of knowledge"?

Is the reference here to Bacon's *Novum Organum* (see p. 12, ll. 239–41)? What is the meaning of this philosophical term?

Is such a technical reference desirable in a sermon title? If not, suggest another.

IV. **Text.**—Observe the way in which the text is driven home by frequent repetition. In whole or in part it is used eleven times out of twenty-eight citations of Scripture.

Is this desirable? May it be overdone?

VI. **Proposition.**—Criticize this as a proposition: "There is a peculiar form of knowledge of truth called Christian knowledge, and the avenue to it is through obedience to the will of God."

Also this: "Act and you shall know."

XI. **Illustrations.**—For the reference at page 9, line 142, see Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World Is Too Much with Us," Cambridge edition, page 349.

In the picture of the man whose faith is battling with his doubt (p. 10, ll. 192–201), note the similar thought in Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, canto 124, iii, iv.

XIV. **Style.**—Note that in the form in which this sermon comes to us we may expect occasional loose sentence structure. Roughness which would be warranted in notes of this kind could not be justified in a finished discourse. What examples of this do you find?

On the other hand, are there finished and beautiful sentences?

Note that this is a sermon preached on a special occasion before the meeting of court, as "election" sermons were formerly preached in New England and as appropriate discourses are given now on the occasions that call for them, such as Thanksgiving, Labor Sunday, etc. See page 5, lines 23–27.

How is the thought in the sermon suited to the occasion?

XV. **General Observations.**—Note the way in which Scripture references are used by Robertson and keep your report for comparative study when a similar usage is found in Newman, Study VII.

In the concluding paragraph compare the counsel given with the personal testimony of Washington Gladden in his poem with the same title in *Ultima Veritas*, Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1912.

## SERMON STUDY II

### HORACE BUSHNELL, "UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Horace Bushnell, American Congregationalist, was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, April 14, 1802; graduated at Yale in 1827; taught school; worked on a newspaper; studied law; then prepared for the ministry, and was ordained in 1833 at Hartford, Connecticut. He maintained a constant battle with ill health; was deeply interested in outdoor life and landscape gardening; became not only a famous preacher, but also a leader in forward movements in theology. His civic influence is indicated by the fact that the park in which the capitol of Connecticut is located is named for him. He died in 1876.

Bushnell is often called "the preacher's preacher." It is said that his sermons are still found on the shelves of many of the manses in Scotland, where preaching is known and valued as hardly anywhere else. Bushnell always wrote out his sermons in full and read them. "There was a nervous insistence about his person, and a peculiar emphasizing swing of his right arm from the shoulder, which no one who has ever heard him is likely to forget. It seemed as if, with this gesture, he swung himself into his subject, and would fain carry others along with him." This is from a description of Bushnell's preaching when he was in the height of his power. The single phrase that interprets Bushnell's constant message is "God in Christ."

The best biography for collateral reading is *Horace Bushnell: Preacher and Theologian*, by Theodore T. Munger, 1899. From this the following passage is quoted:

Valuable as the sermons of Bushnell are to all who read them, they are of special value to the teacher of homiletics. As he studies them, searching for the art that lends such power to the thought, he notes first their structural quality,—built, not thrown together, nor gathered up here and there. He traces the intertwined rhetoric and logic, each tempering the other,—the reasoning little except clear statement and the rhetoric as convincing as the logic. He follows the wide sweep of the thought which yet never wanders from the theme. He notes the Platonic use of the world as furnishing images of spiritual realities; and a kindred habit of condensing his meaning into apothegms that imbed themselves in the memory. He shows how the preacher begins by almost sharing a doubt with his hearer and leaves him wondering why he ever doubted; how theology is transformed into religion which becomes the judge of theology; and how while the whole sermon is instinct with thought and sentiment, it is practical down even to homeliest details;—this and more the teacher will point out to his students, but he has not compassed the preacher, nor can he measure these discourses by any analysis. They have that which defies analysis,—genius, the creative faculty, the gift of direct vision. Something in almost every sermon is to be set aside,—defective exegesis, fanciful interpretation of nature, provincial prejudice, lingering dogma, over-emphasis,—but after this is done, there remains the body of the discourse, marked by that peculiar insight that sees straight into the nature of things, and by that gift of expression which can utter what it sees; each gift reinforcing the other [p. 284].

Keep this estimate in mind as you work with the following sermon and at the close of the study verify or modify Dr. Munger's statement.

The following discourse was preached and first published in London in 1846 and was noted and referred to by Robertson. It may be found in *Sermons for the New Life*, pages 186–205.

## UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

Then went in also that other disciple.—John 20:8

In this slight touch or turn of history is opened to us, if we scan it closely, one of the most serious and fruitful chapters of Christian doctrine. Thus it is that men are ever touching unconsciously the springs of motion in each other; thus it is that one man without thought or intention or even a consciousness of the fact is ever leading some other after him. Little does Peter think, as he comes up where his doubting brother is looking into the sepulcher and goes straight in, after his peculiar manner, that he is drawing in his brother apostle after him. As little does John think, when he loses his misgivings and goes into the sepulcher after Peter, that he is following his brother. And just so, unawares to himself, is every man the whole race through laying hold of his fellow-man to lead him where otherwise he would not go. We overrun the boundaries of our personality—we flow together. A Peter leads a John, a John goes after a Peter, both of them unconscious of any influence exerted or received. And thus our life and conduct are ever propagating themselves by a law of social contagion throughout the circles and times in which we live.

There are then, you will perceive, two sorts of influence belonging to man: that which is active or voluntary, and that which is unconscious; that which we exert purposely or in the endeavor to sway another, as by teaching, by argument, by persuasion, by threatenings, by offers and promises, and that which flows out from us, unawares to ourselves, the same which Peter had over John when he led him into the sepulcher. The importance of our efforts to do good, that is, of our voluntary influence and the sacred obligation we are under to exert ourselves in this way, are often and seriously insisted on. It is thus that Christianity has become in the present age a principle of so much greater activity than it has been

for many centuries before; and we fervently hope that it will yet become far more active than it now is, nor cease to multiply its industry till it is seen by all mankind to embody the beneficence and the living energy of Christ himself.

But there needs to be produced at the same time, and partly for this object, a more thorough appreciation of the relative importance of that kind of influence or beneficence which is insensibly exerted. The tremendous weight and efficacy of this compared with the other, and the sacred responsibility laid upon us in regard to this are felt in no such degree or proportion as they should be; and the consequent loss we suffer in character as well as that which the church suffers in beauty and strength is incalculable. The more stress too needs to be laid on this subject of insensible influence, because it is insensible; because it is out of mind and, when we seek to trace it, beyond a full discovery.

If the doubt occur to any of you in the announcement of this subject, whether we are properly responsible for an influence which we exert insensibly; we are not, I reply, except so far as this influence flows directly from our character and conduct. And this it does, even much more uniformly than our active influence. In the latter we may fail of our end by a want of wisdom or skill, in which case we are still as meritorious in God's sight as if we succeeded. So again we may really succeed and do great good by our active endeavors from motives altogether base and hypocritical, in which case we are as evil in God's sight as if we had failed. But the influences we exert unconsciously will almost never disagree with our real character. They are honest influences, following our character as the shadow follows the sun. And therefore we are much more certainly responsible for them and their effects on the world. They go streaming from us in all directions, though in channels that we do not see, poisoning or healing around the roots of society and among the hidden wells of character. If good ourselves, they are

good; if bad, they are bad. And since they reflect so exactly our character, it is impossible to doubt our responsibility for their effects on the world. We must answer not only for what we do with a purpose, but for the influence we exert insensibly. To give you any just impressions of the breadth and seriousness of such a reckoning I know to be impossible. No mind can trace it. But it will be something gained if I am able to awaken only a suspicion of the vast extent and power of those influences which are ever flowing out unbidden upon society from your life and character.

In the prosecution of my design let me ask of you first of all to expel the common prejudice that there can be nothing of consequence in unconscious influences, because they make no report and fall on the world unobserved. Histories and biographies make little account of the power men exert insensibly over each other. They tell how men have led armies, established empires, enacted laws, gained causes, sung, reasoned, and taught—always occupied in setting forth what they do with a purpose. But what they do without a purpose, the streams of influence that flow out from their persons unbidden on the world, they cannot trace or compute, and seldom ever mention. So also the public laws make men responsible only for what they do with a positive purpose, and take no account of the mischiefs or benefits that are communicated by their noxious or healthful example. The same is true in the discipline of families, churches, and schools: they make no account of the things we do, except we will them. What we do insensibly passes for nothing, because no human government can trace such influences with sufficient certainty to make their authors responsible.

But you must not conclude that influences of this kind are insignificant, because they are unnoticed and noiseless. How is it in the natural world? Behind the mere show, the outward noise and stir of the world, nature always conceals her hand of control and the laws by which she rules. Who

ever saw with the eye, for example, or heard with the ear the exertions of that tremendous astronomic force which every moment holds the compact of the physical universe together? The lightning is in fact but a mere firefly spark in comparison; but because it glares on the clouds and thunders so terribly in the ear and rives the tree or the rock where it falls, many will be ready to think that it is a vastly more potent agent than gravity.

The Bible calls the good man's life a light, and it is the nature of light to flow out spontaneously in all directions and fill the world unconsciously with its beams. So the Christian shines, it would say, not so much because he will as because he is a luminous object. Not that the active influence of Christians is made of no account in the figure, but only that this symbol of light has its propriety in the fact that their unconscious influence is the chief influence and has the precedence in its power over the world. And yet there are many who will be ready to think that light is a very tame and feeble instrument because it is noiseless. An earthquake, for example, is to them a much more vigorous and effective agency. Hear how it comes thundering through the solid foundations of nature. It rocks a whole continent. The noblest works of man—cities, monuments, and temples—are in a moment leveled to the ground or swallowed down the opening gulfs of fire. Little do they think that the light of every morning, the soft and genial and silent light, is an agent many times more powerful. But let the light of the morning cease and return no more, let the hour of morning come and bring with it no dawn: the outcries of a horror-stricken world fill the air and make, as it were, the darkness audible. The beasts go wild and frantic at the loss of the sun. The vegetable growths turn pale and die. A chill creeps on and frosty winds begin to howl across the freezing earth. Colder and yet colder is the night. The vital blood of all creatures at length stops congealed. Down goes the frost toward the

earth's center. The heart of the sea is frozen; nay, the earthquakes are themselves frozen in under their fiery caverns. The very globe itself and all the fellow-planets that have lost their sun are become mere balls of ice, swinging silent in the darkness. Such is the light which revisits us in the silence of the morning. It makes no shock or scar. It would not wake an infant in his cradle. And yet it perpetually new creates the world, rescuing it each morning as a prey from night and chaos. So the Christian is a light, even "the light of the world," and we must not think that because he shines insensibly or silently as a mere luminous object he is therefore powerless. The greatest powers are ever those which lie back of the little stirs and commotions of nature; and I verily believe that the insensible influences of good men are as much more potent than what I have called their voluntary or active, as the great silent powers of nature are of greater consequence than her little disturbances and tumults. The law of human influence is deeper than many suspect, and they lose sight of it altogether. The outward endeavors made by good men or bad to sway others, they call their influence; whereas it is in fact but a fraction, and in most cases but a very small fraction, of the good or evil that flows out of their lives. Nay, I will even go further. How many persons do you meet, the insensible influence of whose manners and character is so decided as often to thwart their voluntary influence, so that, whatever they attempt to do in the way of controlling others, they are sure to carry the exact opposite of what they intend! And it will generally be found that, where men undertake by argument or persuasion to exert a power in the face of qualities that make them odious or detestable or only not entitled to respect, their insensible influence will be too strong for them. The total effect of the life is then of a kind directly opposite to the voluntary endeavor; which of course does not add so much as a fraction to it.

I call your attention next to the twofold powers of effect and expression by which man connects with his fellow-man. If we distinguish man as a creature of language, and thus qualified to communicate himself to others, there are in him two sets or kinds of language, one which is voluntary in the use and one that is involuntary; that of speech in the literal sense, and that expression of the eye, the face, the look, the gait, the motion, the tone or cadence, which is sometimes called the natural language of the sentiments. This natural language, too, is greatly enlarged by the conduct of life, that which in business and society reveals the principles and spirit of men. Speech or voluntary language is a door to the soul that we may open or shut at will; the other is a door that stands open evermore, and reveals to others constantly and often very clearly the tempers, tastes, and motives of our hearts. Within, as we may represent, is character, charging the common reservoir of influence, and through these twofold gates of the soul pouring itself out on the world. Out of one it flows at choice and whensoever we purpose to do good or evil to men. Out of the other it flows each moment as light from the sun, and propagates itself in all beholders.

Then if we go over to others, that is, to the subjects of influence, we find every man endowed with two inlets of impression: the ear and the understanding for the reception of speech; and the sympathetic powers, the sensibilities or affections, for tinder to those sparks of emotion revealed by looks, tones, manners, and general conduct. And these sympathetic powers, though not immediately rational, are yet inlets open on all sides to the understanding and character. They have a certain wonderful capacity to receive impressions and catch the meaning of signs, and propagate in us whatsoever falls into their passive molds from others. The impressions they receive do not come through verbal propositions, and are never received into verbal proposition, it may be, in the mind, and therefore many think nothing

of them. But precisely on this account are they the more powerful, because it is as if one heart were thus going directly into another and carrying in its feelings with it. Beholding as in a glass the feelings of our neighbor, we are changed into the same image by the assimilating power of sensibility and fellow-feeling. Many have gone so far, and not without show at least of reason, as to maintain that the look or expression and even the very features of children are often changed by exclusive intercourse with nurses and attendants. Furthermore, if we carefully consider, we shall find it scarcely possible to doubt that simply to look on bad and malignant faces or those whose expressions have become infected by vice, to be with them and become familiarized to them, is enough permanently to affect the character of persons of mature age. I do not say that it must of necessity subvert their character, for the evil looked upon may never be loved or welcomed in practice; but it is something to have these bad images in the soul giving out their expressions there and diffusing their influence among the thoughts as long as we live. How dangerous a thing is it, for example, for a man to become accustomed to sights of cruelty! What man valuing the honor of his soul would not shrink from yielding himself to such an influence? No more is it a thing of indifference to become accustomed to look on the manners, and receive the bad expression of any kind of sin.

The door of involuntary communication, I have said, is always open. Of course we are communicating ourselves in this way to others at every moment of our intercourse or presence with them. But how very seldom, in comparison, do we undertake by means of speech to influence others! Even the best Christian, one who most improves his opportunities to do good, attempts but seldom to sway another by voluntary influence, whereas he is all the while shining as a luminous object unawares, and communicating of his heart to the world.

But there is yet another view of this double line of communication which man has with his fellow-men which is more general and displays the import of the truth yet more convincingly. It is by one of these modes of communication that we are constituted members of voluntary society, and by the other, parts of a general mass or members of involuntary society. You are all in a certain view individuals, and separate as persons from each other; you are also in a certain other view parts of a common body, as truly as the parts of a stone. Thus if you ask how it is that you and all men came without your consent to exist in society, to be within its power, to be under its laws, the answer is that while you are a man you are also a fractional element of a larger and more comprehensive being called society—be it the family, the church, the state. In a certain department of your nature it is open; its sympathies and feelings are open. On this open side you all adhere together as parts of a larger nature in which there is a common circulation of want, impulse, and law. Being thus made common to each other unwittingly, you become one mass, one consolidated social body animated by one life. And observe how far this involuntary communication and sympathy between the members of a state or family is sovereign over their character. It always results in what we call the national or family spirit; for there is a spirit peculiar to every state and family in the world. Sometimes too this national or family spirit takes a religious or an irreligious character and appears almost to absorb the religious self-government of individuals. What was the national spirit of France, for example, at a certain time but a spirit of infidelity? What is the religious spirit of Spain at this moment [1846] but a spirit of bigotry, quite as wide of Christianity and destructive to character as the spirit of falsehood? What is the family spirit in many a house but the spirit of gain, or pleasure, or appetite, in which everything that is warm, dignified, genial, and good

in religion is visibly absent? Sometimes you will almost fancy that you see the shapes of money in the eyes of the children. So it is that we are led on by nations, as it were, to a good or bad immortality. Far down in the secret foundations of life and society there lie concealed great laws and channels of influence which make the race common to each other in all the main departments or divisions of the social mass—laws which often escape our notice altogether, but which are to society as gravity to the general system of God's works.

But these are general considerations and more fit, perhaps, to give you a rational conception of the modes of influence and their relative power, than to verify that conception or establish its truth. I now proceed to add therefore some miscellaneous proofs of a more particular nature.

And I mention, first of all, the instinct of imitation in children. We begin our mortal experience, not with acts grounded in judgment or reason, or with ideas received through language, but by simple imitation, and under the guidance of this we lay our foundations. The child looks and listens, and whatsoever tone of feeling or manner of conduct is displayed around him, sinks into his plastic, passive soul and becomes a mold of his being ever after. The very handling of the nursery is significant, and the petulance, the passion, the gentleness, the tranquillity indicated by it are all reproduced in the child. His soul is a purely receptive nature, and that for a considerable period without choice or selection. A little farther on he begins voluntarily to copy everything he sees. Voice, manner, gait, everything which the eye sees, the mimic instinct delights to act over. And thus we have a whole generation of future men receiving from us their very beginnings and the deepest impulses of their life and immortality. They watch us every moment in the family, before the hearth and at the table; and when we are meaning them no good or evil, when we

are conscious of exerting no influence over them, they are drawing from us impressions and molds of habit which, if wrong, no heavenly discipline can wholly remove; or if right, no bad associations can utterly dissipate. Now it may be doubted, I think, whether in all the active influence of our lives we do as much to shape the destiny of our fellow-men as we do in this single article of unconscious influence over children.

Still farther on, respect for others takes the place of imitation. We naturally desire the approbation or good opinion of others. You see the strength of this feeling in the matter of fashion. How few persons have the nerve to resist a fashion! We have fashions too in literature and in worship and in moral and religious doctrine, almost equally powerful. How many will violate the best rules of society because it is the practice of their circle! How many reject Christ because of friends or acquaintances who have no suspicion of the influence they exert, and will not have till the last day shows them what they have done! Every good man has thus a power in his person more mighty than his words and arguments, a power others feel when he little suspects it. Every bad man too has a fund of poison in his character which is tainting those around him when it is not in his thoughts to do them an injury. He is read and understood. His sensual tastes and habits, his unbelieving spirit, his suppressed leer at religion have all a power and take hold of the hearts of others, whether he will have it so or not.

Again, how well understood is it that the most active feelings and impulses of mankind are contagious! How quick enthusiasm of any sort is to kindle and how rapidly it catches from one to another, till a nation blazes in the flame! In the case of the Crusades you have an example where the personal enthusiasm of a few men put all the states of Europe in motion. Fanaticism is almost equally contagious. Fear and superstition always infect the mind of the circle in which

they are manifested. The spirit of war generally becomes an epidemic of madness when once it has got possession of a few minds. The spirit of party is propagated by a similar manner. How any slight operation in the market may spread like a fire, if successful, till trade runs wild in a general infatuation, is well known. Now in all these examples the effect is produced, not by active endeavor to carry influence, but mostly by that insensible propagation which follows when a flame of any kind is once kindled.

Is it also true, you may ask, that the religious spirit propagates itself or tends to propagate itself in the same way? I see no reason to question that it does. Nor does anything in the doctrine of spiritual influences, when rightly understood, forbid the supposition. For spiritual influences are never separated from the laws of thought in the individual and the laws of feeling and influence in society. If too every disciple is to be an "epistle known and read of all men," what shall we expect but that all men will be somehow affected by the reading? Or if he is to be a light in the world, what shall we look for but that others seeing his good works shall glorify God on his account? How often is it seen too as a fact of observation that one or a few good men kindle at length a holy fire in the community in which they live, and become the leaven of a general reformation! Such men give a more vivid proof in their persons of the reality of religious faith than any words or arguments could yield. They are active; they endeavor of course to exert a good voluntary influence; but still their chief power lies in their holiness and in the sense they produce in others of their close relation to God.

It now remains to exhibit the very important fact that where the direct or active influence of men is supposed to be great, even this is due in a principal degree to that insensible influence by which their arguments, reproofs, and persuasions are secretly invigorated. It is not mere words which turn

men; it is the heart mounting uncalled into the expression of the features; it is the eye illuminated by reason, the look beaming with goodness; it is the tone of the voice, that instrument of the soul which changes quality with such amazing facility and gives out in the soft, the tender, the tremulous, the firm, every shade of emotion and character. And so much is there in this that the moral stature and character of the man that speaks are likely to be well represented in his manner. If he is a stranger, his way will inspire confidence and attract good will. His virtues will be seen, as it were, gathering round him to minister words and forms of thought, and their voices will be heard in the fall of his cadences. And the same is true of bad men, or of men who have nothing in their character corresponding to what they attempt to do. If without heart or interest you attempt to move another, the involuntary man tells what you are doing in a hundred ways at once. A hypocrite endeavoring to exert a good influence only tries to convey by words what the lying look and the faithless affectation or dry exaggeration of his manner perpetually resists. We have it for a fashion to attribute great or even prodigious results to the voluntary efforts and labors of men. Whatever they effect is commonly referred to nothing but the immediate power of what they do. Let us take an example like that of Paul, and analyze it. Paul was a man of great fervor and enthusiasm. He combined withal more of what is lofty and morally commanding in his character than most of the very distinguished men of the world. Having this for his natural character, and his natural character exalted and made luminous by Christian faith and the manifest indwelling of God, he had of course an almost superhuman sway over others. Doubtless he was intelligent, strong in argument, eloquent, active to the utmost of his powers, but still he moved the world more by what he was than by what he did. The grandeur and spiritual splendor of his character were ever adding to his active efforts an

element of silent power, which was the real and chief cause of their efficacy. He convinced, subdued, inspired, and led because of the half divine authority which appeared in his conduct and his glowing spirit. He fought the good fight because he kept the faith and filled his powerful nature with influences drawn from higher worlds.

And here I must conduct you to a yet higher example, even that of the Son of God, the light of the world. Men dislike to be swayed by direct, voluntary influence. They are jealous of such control and are therefore best approached by conduct and feeling and the authority of simple worth, which seem to make no purposed onset. If goodness appears, they welcome its celestial smile; if heaven descends to encircle them, they yield to its sweetness; if truth appears in the life, they honor it with a secret homage; if personal majesty and glory appear, they bow with reverence and acknowledge with shame their own vileness. Now it is on this side of human nature that Christ visits us, preparing just that kind of influence which the spirit of truth may wield with the most persuasive and subduing effect. It is the grandeur of his character which constitutes the chief power of his ministry, not his miracles or teachings apart from his character. Miracles were useful at the time to arrest attention, and his doctrine is useful at all times as the highest revelation of truth possible in speech; but the greatest truth of the gospel, notwithstanding, is Christ himself—a human body become the organ of the divine nature and revealing under the conditions of an earthly life the glory of God! The Scripture writers have much to say in this connection of the image of God; and an image, you know, is that which simply represents, not that which acts or reasons or persuades. Now it is this image of God which makes the center, the sun itself of the gospel. The journeyings, teachings, miracles, and sufferings of Christ all had their use in bringing out this image or, what is the same, in making conspicuous the character and

feelings of God both toward sinners and toward sin. And here is the power of Christ—it is what of God's beauty, love, truth, and justice shines through him. It is the influence which flows unconsciously and spontaneously out of Christ as the friend of man, the light of the world, the glory of the Father made visible. And some have gone so far as to conjecture that God made the human person originally with a view to its becoming the organ or vehicle by which he might reveal his communicable attributes to other worlds. Christ, they believe, came to inhabit this organ that he might execute a purpose so sublime. The human person is constituted, they say, to be a mirror of God; and God being imaged in that mirror as in Christ, is held up to the view of this and other worlds. It certainly is to the view of this world; and if the divine nature can use this organ so effectively to express itself unto us, if it can bring itself through the looks, tones, motions, and conduct of a human person more close to our sympathies than by any other means, how can we think that an organ so communicative, inhabited by us, is not always breathing our spirit and transferring our image insensibly to others?

I have protracted the argument on this subject beyond what I could have wished, but I cannot dismiss it without suggesting a few thoughts necessary to its complete practical effect.

One very obvious and serious inference from it, and the first which I will name, is that it is impossible to live in this world and escape responsibility. It is not they alone, as you have seen, who are trying purposely to convert or corrupt others who exert an influence; you cannot live without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others, and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without, by signs that have no ambiguous expression. If you had the seeds of a pestilence in your

body, you would not have a more active contagion than you have in your tempers, tastes, and principles. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble. You say that you mean well; at least you think you mean to injure no one. Do you injure no one? Is your example harmless? Is it ever on the side of God and duty? You cannot reasonably doubt that others are continually receiving impressions from your character. As little can you doubt that you must answer for these impressions. If the influence you exert is unconsciously exerted, then it is only the most sincere, the truest expression of your character. And for what can you be held responsible, if not for this? Do not deceive yourselves in the thought that you are at least doing no injury and are therefore living without responsibility; first make it sure that you are not every hour infusing moral death insensibily into your children, wives, husbands, friends, and acquaintances. By a mere look or glance, it is not unlikely, you are conveying the influence that shall turn the scale of someone's immortality. Dismiss therefore the thought that you are living without responsibility; that is impossible. Better is it frankly to admit the truth; and if you will risk the influence of a character unsanctified by duty and religion, prepare to meet your reckoning manfully and receive the just recompense of reward.

The true philosophy or method of doing good is also here explained. It is, first of all and principally, to be good—to have a character that will of itself communicate good. There must and will be active effort where there is goodness of principle; but the latter we should hold to be the principal thing, the root and life of all. Whether it is a mistake more sad or more ridiculous to make mere stir synonymous with doing good, we need not inquire; enough to be sure that one who has taken up such a notion of doing good is for that reason a nuisance to the church. The Christian is

called a light, not lightning. In order to act with effect on others he must walk in the Spirit and thus become the image of goodness: he must be so akin to God and so filled with his dispositions that he shall seem to surround himself with a hallowed atmosphere. It is folly to endeavor to make ourselves shine before we are luminous. If the sun without his beams should talk to the planets and argue with them till the final day, it would not make them shine; there must be light in the sun itself, and then they will shine of course. And this, my brethren, is what God intends for you all. It is the great idea of his gospel and the work of his spirit to make you lights in the world. His greatest joy is to give you character, to beautify your example, to exalt your principles and make you each the depository of his own almighty grace. But in order to do this, something is necessary on your part—a full surrender of your mind to duty and to God, and a perpetual desire of this spiritual intimacy; having this, having a participation thus of the goodness of God you will as naturally communicate good as the sun communicates his beams.

Our doctrine of unconscious and undesigning influence shows how it is also that the preaching of Christ is often so unfruitful, and especially in times of spiritual coldness. It is not because truth ceases to be truth, nor of necessity because it is preached in a less vivid manner, but because there are so many influences preaching against the preacher. He is one, the people are many; his attempt to convince and persuade is a voluntary influence; their lives on the other hand, and especially the lives of those who profess what is better, are so many unconscious influences ever streaming forth upon the people and back and forth between each other. He preaches the truth, and they with one consent are preaching the truth down; and how can he prevail against so many and by a kind of influence so unequal? When the people of God are glowing with spiritual devotion to him and with

love to men, the case is different; then they are all preaching with the preacher and making an atmosphere of warmth for his words to fall in; great is the company of them that publish the truth, and proportionally great its power. Shall I say more? Have you not already felt, my brethren, the application to which I would bring you? We do not exonerate ourselves; we do not claim to be nearer to God or holier than you; but, ah, you know not how easy it is to make a winter about us, or how cold it feels! Our endeavor is to preach the truth of Christ and his Cross as clearly and as forcibly as we can. Sometimes it has a visible effect and we are filled with joy; sometimes it has no effect, and then we struggle on as we must, but under great oppression. Have we none among you that preach against us in your lives? If we show you the light of God's truth, does it never fall on banks of ice; which if the light shines through, the crystal masses are yet as cold as before? We do not accuse you: that we leave to God and to those who may rise up in the last day to testify against you. If they shall come out of your own families; if they are the children that wear your names, the husband or wife of your affections; if they declare that you by your example kept them away from Christ's truth and mercy, we may have accusations to meet of our own and we leave you to acquit yourselves as best you may. I only warn you here of the guilt which our Lord Jesus Christ will impute to them that hinder his gospel.

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—For purposes of comparison, read Charles Reynolds Brown, *Yale Talks*, 1919, pages 84–96, "Unconscious Influence," from Acts 5:15. Mark the difference between a formal sermon and a chapel talk. Which is the better text for the subject?

II. **Analysis.**—Bushnell clearly announces the plan. At page 23, lines 78–81, he indicates the first point of the main discussion. At page 29, lines 288–92, he announces a change from "general considerations" to "miscellaneous proofs of a more particular nature." The "argument" by general and particular discussion is thus carried to page 34, lines 474–77, at which point "a few thoughts necessary to its complete practical effect" are suggested.

Note this method as standing between the detailed announcement of the steps of the discussion at one time, as in Spurgeon (p. 125, ll. 74–80), and complete silence as to the steps intended in the discussion, as in Ainsworth. Which is the best?

III. **Title.**—Is there any value in the sense of surprise that must instantly be felt in the use of the adjective *unconscious* in relation to *influence?*

IV. **Text.**—Bushnell was a master in using texts.

One of the most noticeable things about the sermons is the relation between text and title. When they have been announced, he has already half preached the sermon. The title is not a happy hint nor a catching phrase, but is the subject itself in little. He starts with a full conception of his discourse, not working his way into it, but working it out, having already gone through it. Hence it is

not a tentative groping after the truth, but the truth itself, in brief but clear proportions. The title of the first discourse in "Sermons for the New Life"—"Every Man's Life a Plan of God"—contains his whole thought on the subject.—MUNGER, *Horace Bushnell*, p. 280.

Munger speaks of this "allusive text." What does he mean? Is this a desirable quality in texts?

V. **Subject.**—Although not formally announced, Bushnell regards the subject as clearly in the minds of his hearers, "If any doubt occur to any of you in the announcement of this subject" (p. 22, l. 51). And it is involved in such sentences as "influence or beneficence which is insensibly exerted" (p. 22, l. 39).

Would it have been better to have made a formal announcement?

VI. **Proposition.**—No proposition is formally announced. It is involved in such sentences as the following:

Page 21, lines 3–8: Omit "Thus it is that" and use the remainder.

Page 21, lines 18–20: Omit "And thus."

Page 21, lines 21–27: Condense this.

Page 23, lines 74–77: Frame a proposition using the words in such order as this, "Those influences which are ever flowing out unbidden upon society from your life and character are vast and powerful."

Using the four suggestions above, state a proposition which seems to you clear and concise.

Is it better to state a proposition definitely, or to have one involved in the introduction as it is here?

X. **Sources.**—Bushnell was the author of *Christian Nurture*, one of the earliest and epoch-making books in

religious education. Note in this sermon the range and accuracy of his insight into the spiritual nature of man, his mastery of the religious problems of the parish, his estimate of the worth of the church.

XI. **Illustrations.**—Study the similes in this sermon carefully. Note the use of the figure of light (p. 24, l. 129, to p. 25, l. 142). Hold this for comparison with Brooks (p. 44, ll. 46–51).

XII. **Transitions.**—This sermon is excellently adapted for the study of the rhetorical devices by which a skilful master of English is able to carry his hearers from point to point by the use of a "backward-looking" term of some kind. Note the use of "but," "again," "also," "then." Make the list carefully that it may be compared with a similar study in Beecher.

## SERMON STUDY III

### BROOKS, "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Phillips Brooks, American, Protestant Episcopal, was born in Boston, December 13, 1835, of Puritan heritage, blending in his own the names of two of New England's oldest and most distinguished families. He graduated at Harvard in 1855; studied at the Protestant Episcopal Theological School, Alexandria, Virginia; became rector in Philadelphia; then was called to Trinity Church, Boston, in 1869; was consecrated Bishop of Massachusetts in 1891; died January 23, 1893.

Phillips Brooks was pre-eminently a preacher. His intellectual gifts and commanding personality gave him a place of outstanding leadership in the American pulpit. His printed sermons, while necessarily lacking in this form the charm and force of spoken messages, are among the classics of homiletical literature. He was a man of the broadest human sympathies and his power over men was unsurpassed. His preaching was summed up in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the brotherhood of man. He wrote many poems and hymns, among which the most popular and enduring is "O Little Town of Bethlehem." His *Lectures on Preaching* is one of the best in the series of the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale. The sermon which we study is taken from the volume also entitled *The Light of the World*, published in New York, by E. P. Dutton & Co., and is printed here by their kind permission.

The best biographies are: *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* by Alexander V. G. Allen, 1900, three volumes, and *Phillips Brooks* by Alexander V. G. Allen, 1907, one volume. The latter is doubtless the better for the student; it contains all that is essential in the larger work.

During the height of his power Phillips Brooks regularly wrote one sermon each week; and he gave all the best part of every morning to the work. He was generally sure of his text by Monday. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings he brought together all the material that he could find in the form of notes either made at previous times or freshly wrought out. On Wednesday morning he wrote out the plan of the sermon. He took a sheet of sermon paper about 7×9 inches in size, folded it once, thus making four pages. These he filled out fully in all cases with his outline. He wrote in a fine and legible hand, like the Puritan preachers. When finished the outline alone contained about a thousand words. The paragraphs in this plan were studied with great care. Against each paragraph he placed a figure showing the number of pages that the paragraph would occupy in expanded form in the manuscript. He wrote thirty pages in each sermon. If the number of pages assigned to the paragraphs did not equal this he went over them carefully, cutting or expanding to meet the space at his command. It seems strange that such an apparently mechanical program as this, which was so slavishly followed, should not have limited the wonderfully vital and inspiring work which Phillips Brooks did in the pulpit. It shows that the man is always more than his method and that each preacher must do that which is in accord with his own temper.

## THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the World; he that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.—John 8:12.

Sometimes Jesus gathers his work and nature up in one descriptive word, and offers it, as it were out of a wide-open hand, complete to His disciples. In such a word all the details of His relation to the soul and to the world are comprehensively included. As the disciple listens and receives it, he feels all his fragmentary and scattered experiences drawing together and rounding into unity. As, having heard it, he carries it forth with him into his life, he finds all future experiences claiming their places within it, and getting their meaning from it. Such words of Jesus are like spheres of crystal into which the world is gathered, and where the past and future, the small and great, may all be read.

It seems to me as if there were days on which we wanted to set one of these comprehensive words of Christ before our eyes and study it. There are days when we must give ourselves to some particular detail of Christian truth or conduct. There are other days when we are faced by the question of the whole meaning of the Christian faith and its relation to the great world of life. Vague and perplexed the soul is to which its faith does not come with distinct and special touches, pressing directly on every movement of its life. But pure and petty is the soul which has no large conception of its faith, always abiding around and enfolding its details and giving them the dignity and unity they need.

One of these comprehensive words of Jesus is our text this morning.

I want to ask you then to think with me what Jesus means when he declares himself to be the "Light of the World" or the "Light of Life." The words come down to us out of the old Hebrew temple where he spoke them first. They pierce into the center of our modern life. Nay, they

have done much to make our modern life, and to make it different from the old Hebrew temple where they were spoken first. It will be good indeed if we can feel something of the power that is in them, and understand how clear is the conception of Life which they include, how far our present Christianity is an embodiment of that conception, how far it fails of it, how certain it is in being ever truer and truer to that conception that the faith of Christ must come to be the Master of the soul and of the world.

We may begin, then, by considering what would be the idea of Christ and his relation to the world which we should get if this were all we knew of him—if he as yet had told us nothing of himself but what is wrapped up in these rich and simple words, "I am the Light of the World," "I am the Light of Life." They send us instantly abroad into the world of Nature. They set us on the hill-top watching the sunrise as it fills the east with glory. They show us the great plain flooded and beaten and quivering with the noonday sun. They hush and elevate us with the mystery and sweetness and suggestiveness of the evening's glow. There could be no image so abundant in its meaning; no fact plucked from the world of Nature could have such vast variety of truth to tell; and yet one meaning shines out from the depth of the figure and irradiates all its messages. They all are true by its truth. What is that meaning? It is the essential richness and possibility of the world and its essential belonging to the sun. Light may be great and glorious in itself. The sun may be tumultuous with fiery splendor; the atmosphere may roll in billows of glory for its million miles; but light as related to earth has its significance in the earth's possibilities. The sun, as the world's sun, is nothing without the world, on which it shines, and whose essential character and glory it displays.

Do you see what I mean? When the sun rose this morning it found the world here. It did not make the world. It

did not fling forth on its earliest ray this solid globe, which was not and would not have been but for the sun's rising. What did it do? It found the world in darkness, torpid and heavy and asleep; with powers all wrapped up in sluggishness; with life that was hardly better or more alive than death. The sun found this great sleeping world and woke it. It bade it be itself. It quickened every slow and sluggish faculty. It called to the dull streams, and said, "Be quick"; to the dull birds and bade them sing; to the dull fields and made them grow; to the dull men and bade them talk and think and work. It flashed electric invitation to the whole mass of sleeping power which really was the world, and summoned it to action. It did not make the world. It did not sweep a dead world off and set a live world in its place. It did not start another set of processes unlike those which had been sluggishly moving in the darkness. It poured strength into the essential processes which belonged to the very nature of the earth which it illuminated. It glorified, intensified, fulfilled the earth; so that with the sun's work incomplete, with part of the earth illuminated and the rest lying in the darkness still, we can most easily conceive of the dark region looking in its half-life drowsily over to the region which was flooded with light, and saying, "There, there is the true earth! That is the real planet. In light and not in darkness the earth truly is itself."

That is the Parable of the Light. And now it seems to me to be of all importance to remember and assert all that to be distinctly a true parable of Christ. He says it is: "I am the Light of the World." A thousand things that means. A thousand subtle, mystic miracles of deep and intricate relationship between Christ and humanity must be enfolded in those words; but over and behind and within all other meanings, it means this—the essential richness and possibility of humanity and its essential belonging to Divinity. Christ is unspeakably great and glorious in Himself. The

glory which He had with His Father "before the world was," of that we can only meditate and wonder; but the glory which he has had since the world was, the glory which He has had in relation to the world, is all bound up with the world's possibilities, has all consisted in the utterance and revelation and fulfilment of capacities which were in the very nature of the world on which his light has shone.

Do you see what I mean? Christ rises on a soul. Christ rises on the world. I speak in crude and superficial language. For the moment I make no account of the deep and sacred truth—the truth which alone is finally and absolutely true—that Christ has always been with every soul and all the world. I talk in crude and superficial words, and say Christ comes to any soul or to the world. What is it that happens? If the figure of the Light is true, Christ when He comes finds the soul or the world really existent, really having within itself its holiest capabilities, really moving, though dimly and darkly, in spite of its hindrances, in its true directions; and what He does for it is to quicken it through and through, to sound the bugle of its true life in its ears, to make it feel the nobleness of movements which have seemed to it ignoble, the hopefulness of impulses which have seemed hopeless, to bid it be itself. The little lives which do in little ways that which the life of Jesus does completely, the noble characters of which we think we have the right to say that they are the lights of human history, this is true also of them. They reveal and they inspire. The worthless becomes full of worth, the insignificant becomes full of meaning at their touch. They faintly catch the feeble reflection of His life who is the true Light of the World, the real illumination and inspiration of humanity.

But metaphors bewilder and embarrass us when once we have caught their general meaning, and they begin to tempt us to follow them out into details into which they were not meant to lead us. Let us then leave the figure, and try to

grasp the truth in its complete simplicity and see what some of its applications are. The truth is that every higher life to which man comes, and especially the highest life in Christ, is in the true line of man's humanity; there is no transportation to a foreign region. There is the quickening and fulfilling of what man by the very essence of his nature is. The more man becomes irradiated with Divinity, the more, not the less, truly he is man. The fullest Christian experience is simply the fullest life. To enter into it therefore is no wise strange. The wonder and the unnaturalness is that any child of God should live outside of it, and so in all his life should never be himself.

When I repeat such truths they seem self-evident. No man, I think, denies them; and yet I feel the absence of their power all through men's struggles for the Christian life. A sense of foreignness and unnaturalness and strangeness lies like a fog across the entrance of the divine country; a certain wonder whether I, a man, have any business there; an unreality about it all; a break and gulf between what the world is and what we know it ought to be—all these elements in the obscurity, the feebleness, the vague remoteness, of religion.

And yet how clear the Bible is about it all! How clear Christ is! It is redemption and fulfilment which he comes to bring to man. Those are his words. There is a true humanity which is to be restored, and all those unattained possibilities are to be filled out. There is no human affection, of fatherhood, brotherhood, childhood, which is not capable of expressing divine relations. Man is a child of God, for whom his Father's house is waiting. The whole creation is groaning and travailing till man shall be complete. Christ comes not to destroy but to fulfil. What is the spirit of such words as those? Is it not all a claiming of man through all his life for God? Is it not an assertion that just so far as he is not God's he is not truly man? Is it not a declaration that

whatever he does in his true human nature, undistorted, unperverted, is divinely done, and therefore that the divine perfection of his life will be in the direction which these efforts of his nature indicate and prophesy?

I bid you to think whether to clearly believe this would not make the world more full of courage and of hope. If you could thoroughly believe that the divine life to which you were called was the completion, and not the abrogation and surrender, of your humanity, would you not be more strong and eager in your entrance on it? If below the superficial currents which so tremendously draw us away from righteousness and truth we always felt the tug and majestic pressure of the profoundest currents setting toward righteousness and truth, would not our souls be stronger? Shall we not think that? Shall we leave it to doubting lips to tell about the "tendency which makes for righteousness"? Shall we not tell of it—we who believe in Christ, who made in His very being the declaration of the nativeness of righteousness to man, who bade all generations see in Him how the Son of Man is the Son of God in the foundation and intention of His life?

Let us see how all this is true in various applications. Apply it first to the standards of character. We talk of Christian character as if it were some separate and special thing unattempted, unsuggested by the human soul until it became aware of Christ. There would come a great flood of light and reality into it all if we knew thoroughly that the Christian character is nothing but the completed human character. The Christian is nothing but the true man. Nothing but the true man, do I say? As if that were a little thing! As if man, with any inflow of divinity, could be, could wish to be anything more or different from man! But we imagine a certain vague array of qualities which are to belong to the Christian life which are not the intrinsic human qualities; and so our Christian type becomes unreal,

and our human type loses its dignity and greatness. Human courage, human patience, human trustiness, human humility—these filled with the fire of God make the graces of the Christian life. We are still haunted by the false old distinction of the natural virtues and the Christian graces. The Christian graces are nothing but the natural virtues held up into the light of Christ. They are made of the same stuff; they are lifted along the same lines; but they have found their pinnacle. They have caught their illumination which their souls desire. Manliness has not been changed into Godliness; it has fulfilled itself in Godliness.

As soon as we understand all this, then what a great, clear thing salvation becomes. Its one idea is health. Not rescue from suffering, not plucking out of fire, not deportation to some strange, beautiful region where the winds blow with other influences and the skies drop with other dews, not the enchaining of the spirit with some unreal celestial spell, but health—the cool, calm vigor of the normal human life; the making of the man to be himself; the calling up out of the depths of his being and the filling with vitality of that self which is truly he—this is salvation!

Of course it all assumes that in this mixture of good and evil which we call Man, this motley and medley which we call human character, it is the good and not the evil which is the foundation color of the whole. Man is a son of God on whom the Devil has laid his hand, not a child of the Devil whom God is trying to steal. That is the first truth of all religion. That is what Christ is teaching everywhere and always. "We called the chess-board white, we call it black"; but it is, this chess-board of our human life, white not black—black spotted on white, not white spotted upon black.

It is easy to make this question of precedence and intrusion seem unimportant. "If man stands here today half bad, half good, what matters it how it came about—whether the good intruded on the bad, or the bad upon the good? Here

is the present actual condition. Is not that enough?" No, surely it is not. Everything depends in the great world upon whether Peace or War is the Intruder and the Rebel, upon whether Liberty or Slavery is the ideal possessor of the field. Everything depends in personal life upon whether Cowardice has invaded the rightful realm of Courage, or Courage has pitched its white tent on dusky fields which belong to Cowardice, or whether Truth or Falsehood is the ultimate king to whom the realm belongs. The great truth of Redemption, the great idea of Salvation, is that the realm belongs to Truth, that the Lie is everywhere and always an intruder and a foe. He came in, therefore he may be driven out. When he is driven out, and man is purely man, then man is saved. It is the glory and preciousness of the first mysterious, poetic chapters of Genesis that they are radiant through all their sadness with that truth.

Does this make smaller or less important that great Power of God whereby the human life passes from the old condition to the new—the power of conversion? Certainly not! What task could be more worthy of the Father's power and love than this assertion and fulfilment of His child? All of our Christian thinking and talking has been and is haunted by a certain idea of failure and recommencement. Man is a failure, so there shall be a new attempt; and in place of the man we will make the Christian! There is nothing of that tone about what Jesus says. The Christian to Jesus is the man. The Christian, to all who think the thought of Jesus after Him, is the perfected and completed man.

Just see what this involves. Hear with what naturalness it clothes the invitations of the Gospel. They are not strange summons to some distant, unknown land; they are God's call to you to be yourself. They appeal to a homesickness in your own heart and make it their confederate. That you should be the thing you have been, and not be that better thing, that new man which is the oldest man, the first type

and image of your being, is unnatural and awful. The world in the new light of the Gospel expects it of you, is longing for it. The creation, in Saint Paul's great phrase, is groaning and travailing, waiting for the manifestation of this child of God which is hidden in your life.

And all this vindicates itself by a mysterious and beautiful familiarity in the new life when you have begun to live it. With confidence I know that I could appeal to the experience of many of you who hear me, to recognize what I mean. I take a plant whose home is in the tropics, but which has grown to stunted life amid the granite of Vermont. I carry it and set it where its nature essentially belongs. Does it not know the warm earth, and does not the warm earth know it?

Do not the palm trees, and the sky which it sees through their broad leaves, and the warmer stars which glorify the sky at night speak to the amazed but satisfied heart of the poor plant in tones which it understands? And when a soul is set there where its nature always has belonged, in the obedience of God, in the dear love of Christ, does it not know the new life which embraces it? Ah, it has lived in it always in the idea of its being, in the conception of existence which has been always at its heart. It has walked the great halls of the divine obedience. It has stood by this river of divine refreshment. It has seen these great prospects of celestial hope. It has climbed to these hill-tops of prophetic vision. They are not wholly strange. Nothing is wholly strange to any man when he becomes it, which it has always been in his nature to become. Because it has always been in man to become the fulfilled man, which is the Christian, therefore for a man to have become a Christian is never wholly strange.

See also here what a true ground there is for the appeal which you desire to make to other souls. It must be from the naturalness of the new life that you call out to your brethren. You must claim your brother for the holiness to which his

nature essentially belongs. "Come home!" "Come home!" "I have found the homestead!" "I have found the Father!" "I have found the true manhood!" "I have found what you and all men were made to be!" So the soul out of the tropics cries out to its brother souls still lingering among the granite hills, and the voice has all the persuasiveness of Nature. The soft southern winds which bring it tell the souls to which it comes that it is true.

There are two sorts of attraction which draw, two sorts of fascination which hold human nature everywhere—the attraction of the natural and the attraction of the unnatural. The attraction of the natural everywhere is healthiest and highest. The attraction of the natural is the true attraction of Religion—most of all, the attraction of the Christian Gospel.

And yet again this makes the higher life intelligible, and so makes it real. This alone makes such a thing as Christian Manliness conceivable. Christian Unmanliness is what a great many of men's pious, earnest struggles have been seeking. If the saint on to all eternity is to be the ever-ripening man, never changing into any new and unknown thing which he was not before, never to all eternity unfolding one capacity which was not in the substance of his humanity from its creation, then it follows that the most celestial and transcendent goodnesses must still be one in kind with the familiar virtues which sometimes in their crude and earthly shapes seem low and commonplace. Courage in all the worlds is the same courage. Truth before the throne of God is the same thing as when neighbor talks with neighbor on the street. Mercy will grow tenderer and finer, but will be the old blessed balm of life in the fields of eternity that it was in your workshop and in your home. Unselfishness will expand and richen till it enfolds the life like sunshine, but it will be the same self-denial, opening into a richer self-indulgence, which it was when it first stole in with one thin

sunbeam on the startled soul. There is no new world of virtues in any heaven or in any heavenly experience of life. God is good and man is good; and as man becomes more good, he becomes not merely more like God, but more himself. As he becomes more godly, he becomes more manly too.

It is so hard for us to believe in the Mystery of Man. "Behold man is this," we say, shutting down some near gate which falls only just beyond, quite in sight of, what human nature already has attained. If man would go beyond that he must be something else than man. And just then something breaks the gate away, and lo, far out beyond where we can see stretches the Mystery of Man. The beautiful, the awful mystery of man! To him, to man, all lower lines have climbed, and having come to him, have found a field where evolution may go on forever.

The mystery of man! How Christ believed in that! Oh, my dear friends, he who does not believe in that cannot enter into the full glory of the Incarnation, cannot really believe in Christ. Where the mysterious reach of manhood touches the divine, there Christ appears. No mere development of human nature outgoing any other reach that it has made, yet still not incapable of being matched, perhaps of being overcome; not that, not that—unique and separate forever—but possible, because of this same mystery of man in which the least of us has share. To him who knows the hither edges of that mystery in his own life, the story of how in, on, at its depths it should be able to receive and to contain divinity cannot seem incredible; may I not say, cannot seem strange?

Men talk about the Christhood, and say, "How strange it is! Strange that Christ should have been—strange that Christ should have suffered for mankind." I cannot see that so we most magnify Him or bring Him nearest to us. Once feel the mystery of man and is it strange? Once think it possible that God should fill a humanity with Himself, once see humanity capable of being filled with God, and can you

conceive of His not doing it? Must there not be an Incarnation? Do you not instantly begin to search earth for the holy steps? Once think it possible that Christ can, and are you not sure that Christ must give himself for our Redemption? So only, when it seems inevitable and natural, does the Christhood become our pattern. Then only does it shine on the mountain-top up toward which we can feel the low lines of our low life aspiring. The Son of God is also the Son of Man. Then in us, the sons of men, there is the key to the secret of His being and His work. Know Christ that you may know yourself. But, oh, also know yourself that you may know Christ!

I think to every Christian there come times when all the strangeness disappears from the divine humanity which stands radiant at the center of his faith. He finds it hard to believe in himself and in his brethren perhaps; but that Christ should be and should be Christ appears the one reasonable, natural, certain thing in all the universe. In Him all broken lines unite; in Him all scattered sounds are gathered into harmony; and out of the consummate certainty of Him, the soul comes back to find the certainty of common things which the lower faith holds, which advancing faith loses, and then finds again in Christ.

How every truth attains to its enlargement and reality in this great truth—that the soul of man carries the highest possibilities within itself, and that what Christ does for it is to kindle and call forth these possibilities to actual existence. We do not understand the Church until we understand this truth. Seen in its light the Christian Church is nothing in the world except the promise and prophecy and picture of what the world in its idea is and always has been, and in its completion must visibly become. It is the primary crystalization of humanity. It is no favored, elect body caught from the ruin, given a salvation in which the rest can have no part. It is an attempt to realize the universal possibility. All men

are its potential members. The strange thing for any man is not that he should be within it, but that he should be without it. Every good movement of any most secular sort is a struggle toward it, a part of its activity. All the world's history is ecclesiastical history, is the story of the success and failure, the advance and hindrance of the ideal humanity, the Church of the living God. Well may the prophet poet greet it—

> O heart of mine, keep patience; looking forth
> As from the Mount of Vision I behold
> Pure, just, and free the Church of Christ on earth—
> The martyr's dream, the golden age foretold.

Tell me, my friends, can we not all think that we see a progress and elevation in men's ideas about their souls' conversion which would seem to show an entrance into the power of this truth? In old times more than today he who entered into the new life of Christ thought of himself as rescued, snatched from the wreck of a ruined and sinking world, given an exceptional privilege of safety. Today more than in old times the saved soul looks with a delighted and awe-struck wonder into his new experience, and sees in it the true and natural destiny of all mankind. "Lo, because I am this, I know that all men may be it. God has but shown me in my soul's experience of what all souls are capable." And so the new life does not separate the soul from, but brings it more deeply into sympathy with, all humanity.

I believe that here also is the real truth and the final satisfaction of men's minds as concerns the Bible. As the spiritual life with which the Bible deals is the flower of human life, so the Book which deals with it is the flower of human books. But it is not thereby an unhuman book. It is the most human of all books. In it is seen the everlasting struggle of the man-life to fulfil itself in God. All books in which that universal struggle of humanity is told are younger

brothers—less clear and realized and developed utterances of that which is so vivid in the history of the sacred people and is perfect in the picture of the divine Man. I will not be puzzled, but rejoice when I find in all the sacred books, in all deep, serious books of every sort, foregleams and adumbrations of the lights and shadows which lie distinct upon the Bible page. I will seek and find the assurance that my Bible is inspired of God not in virtue of its distance from, but in virtue of its nearness to, the human experience and heart. It is in that experience and heart that the real inspiration of God is given, and thence it issues into the written book:

> Out of the heart of Nature rolled
> The Burdens of the Bible old.
> The Litanies of nations came
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame;
> Up from the burning core below
> The Canticles of love and woe.

That book is most inspired which most worthily and deeply tells the story of the most inspired life.

Is there not here the light of every darkness and the key to every riddle? The missionary goes into a heathen land. What shall he make of what he finds there? Shall he not see in it all the raw material and the suggested potency of that divine life which he knows that it is the rightful condition of the Sons of God to live? Shall he not be eager and ingenious, rather than reluctant, to find and recognize and proclaim the truth that the Father has left Himself without witness in no home where His children live? As in the crudest social ways and habits of the savage islanders he sees the beginnings and first efforts toward the most perfect and elaborate civilizations which the world contains—the germs of constitutions, the promise of senates and cabinets and treaties—so in the ignorant and half-brutal faiths shall he not discover the upward movement of the soul to which he shall then delight to offer all the rich light of the teaching which has come to his

centuries of Christian faith, saying, "Lo, this is what it means: Whom you are ignorantly worshipping, Him declare I unto you?"

Among all the philosophies of history where is there one which matches with this simple story that man is the child of God, forever drawn to his Father, beaten back from Him by base waves of passion, sure to come to Him in the end. There is no philosophy of history which ever has been written like the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The first idea, the wanton wandering, the discontent, the brave return, the cordial welcome—all are there. It is the history of man's action and man's thought; it is the story of his institutions and of his ideas; it holds the explanation of the past and the promise of the future; its beginning is where the first conception of what man shall be lies in the heart of the Creative Power; its end is in that endless life which man, having been reconciled to God and come to the completion of his idea, is to live in his Father's house forever.

Do we ask ourselves, as well we may, at what point in that long history the world is standing in this rich and interesting period in which we live? Who shall precisely say? But in the wonderful story of the Prodigal Son must there not have been one moment when at the very height of the revel there came a taste of the bitterness into the wine, and when the faces of the harlots, in some gleam of fresh morning sunlight which broke into the hot and glaring chamber, seemed tawdry and false and cruel? Must there not have been a moment somewhere then, perhaps just when the carouse seemed most tempestuous and hopeless, a moment when the heart of the exile turned to his home, and the life with his father seemed so strong and simple and natural and real, so cool and sweet and true and healthy, that the miserable tumult and the gaudy glare about him for a moment became unreal and lost its hold? Much, much had yet to come—the poverty and swine and husks—before the boy gathered

himself together and arose and said, "I will go to my father"; but the tide was turned, the face was set homeward, after that one moment of true sight of the true light in the hall of unnatural revel and resplendent sin. I sometimes think that there, in many ways just there, is where our age is standing with its startled and bewildered face.

I may be wrong or right about our age, I may be wrong or right about many of the ways in which it has appeared to me as if the truth which I have tried to preach to you today touches the great problems of religion and of life. But now I turn to you, young men and women, earnest and brave and hopeful—many of you also sorely perplexed and puzzled. What does this truth mean for you? Does it not mean everything for you if Truth and Courage and Unselfishness and Goodness are indeed natural to man and all Evil is unnatural and foreign?

There is indeed a superficial and a deeper nature. I am talking of the deeper nature. I am talking of the nature which belongs to every one of us as the child of God. I am talking, not of the waves which may be blown this way or that way upon the surface, but of the great tide which is heaving shoreward down below.

The man who lives in that deeper nature, the man who believes himself the Son of God, is not surprised at his best moments and his noblest inspirations. He is not amazed when he does a brave thing or an unselfish thing. He is amazed at himself when he is a coward or a liar. He accepts self-restraint only as a temporary condition, an immediate necessity of life. Not self-restraint but self-indulgence, the free, unhindered utterance of the deepest nature, which is good—that is the only final picture of man's duty, which he tolerates. And all the life is one; the specially and specifically religious being but the point at which the diamond for the moment shines, with all the diamond nature waiting in reserve through the whole substance of the precious stone.

Great is the power of a life which knows that its highest experiences are its truest experiences, that it is most itself when it is at its best. For it each high achievement, each splendid vision, is a sign and token of the whole nature's possibility. What a piece of the man was for that shining instant, it is the duty of the whole man to be always. When the hand has once touched the rock the heart cannot be satisfied until the whole frame has been drawn up out of the waves and stands firm on its two feet on the solid stone. Are there not very many of us to whom the worst that we have been seems ever possible of repetition; but the best that we have ever been shines a strange and splendid miracle which cannot be repeated? The gutter in which we lay one day is always claiming us. The mountain-top on which we stood one glorious morning seems to have vanished from the earth.

The very opposite of all that is the belief of him who knows himself the child of God. For him, for him alone, sin has its true horror. "What! have I, who once have claimed God, whom once God has claimed, have I been down into the den of Devils? Have I brutalized my brain with drink? Have I let my heart burn with lust? Have I, the child of God, cheated and lied and been cruel and trodden on my brethren to satisfy my base ambition?" Oh, believe me, believe me, my dear friends, you never will know the horror and misery of sin till you know the glory and mystery of man. You never can estimate the disaster of an interruption till you know the worth of what it interrupts. You never will understand wickedness by dwelling on the innate depravity of man. You can understand wickedness only by knowing that the very word man means holiness and strength.

Here, too, lies the sublime and beautiful variety of human life. It is as beings come to their reality that they assert their individuality. In the gutter all the poor wretches lie huddled together, one indistinguishable mass of woe; but

on the mountain-top each figure stands out separate and clear against the blueness of the sky. The intense variety of Light! The awful monotony of Darkness! Men are various; Christians ought to be various a thousand-fold. Strive for your best, that there you may find your most distinctive life. We cannot dream of what interest the world will have when every being in its human multitude shall shine with his own light and color, and be the child of God which it is possible for him to be—which he has ever been in the true home-land of his Father's thought.

Do I talk fancies? Do I paint visions upon unsubstantial clouds? If it seems to you that I do, I beg you to come back now, as I close, to those words which I quoted to you at the beginning. "I am the Light of the World," said Jesus. Do you not see now what I meant when I declared that it was in making the world know itself that Christ was primarily the Power of the World's Redemption? The Revealer and the Redeemer are not two persons, but only one—one Saviour.

What then? If Christ can make you know yourself; if, as you walk with Him day by day, He can reveal to you your sonship to the Father; if, keeping daily company with Him, you can come more and more to know how native is goodness and how unnatural sin is to the soul of man; if, dwelling with Him who is both God and Man, you can come to believe both in God and in Man through Him, then you are saved—saved from contempt, saved from despair, saved into courage and hope and charity and the power to resist temptation, and the passionate pursuit of perfectness.

It is as simple and as clear as that. Our religion is not a system of ideas about Christ. It is Christ. To believe in Him is what? To say a creed? To join a church? No; but to have a great, strong, divine Master, whom we perfectly love, whom we perfectly trust, whom we will follow anywhere, and who, as we follow Him or walk by His side, is always

drawing out in us our true nature and making us determined to be true to it through everything, is always compelling us to see through falsehood and find the deepest truth, which is, in one great utterance of it, that we are the sons of God, who is thus always "leading us to the Father."

The hope of the world is in the ever richer naturalness of the highest life. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."

Your hope and mine is the same. The day of our salvation has not come till every voice brings us one message; till Christ, the Light of the world, everywhere reveals to us the divine secret of our life; till everything without joins with the consciousness all alive within, and "the Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—Compare the impression made by Bushnell. Which would reach more effectively an average audience today? Why?

II. **Analysis.**—Note the following suggestions:

1. Does the short sentence (p. 43, ll. 25, 26) mark the close of the Introduction and "then" (p. 43, l. 27) the beginning of the discussion?

2. At page 46, line 136, a division is announced, "Let us then leave the figure, and try to grasp the truth in its complete simplicity and see what some of its applications are."

3. At page 48, line 193, the applications begin.

4. At page 60, line 601, appears to be the announcement of a formal conclusion.

5. Is there a clear hint at the plan in page 43, lines 17–19, "The whole meaning of the Christian faith and its relation to the great world of life."

V. **Subject.**—At no point is the subject formally announced, as, for example, by such words as "The subject that we shall consider today is," etc. It is plainly involved in more than one sentence. What are some of these indirect statements? Would the sermon have been better if the subject had been clearly announced?

VI. **Proposition.**—Leaving off the conditional clause, could this be taken as the proposition which is to be discussed in the sermon, "Christ when He comes finds the soul of the world really existent . . . . ; and what He does for it is to quicken it through and through, . . . . to bid it be itself" (p. 46, ll. 115–24)?

In thus condensing the entire sentence indicated above, has its meaning been essentially changed?

If this proposition is unsatisfactory, frame one of your own.

VII. **Introduction.**—It occupies about one twenty-eighth of the sermon. Is this about the right length?

Does the first sentence arrest attention and create interest by its suggestion of the figurative value of *light?*

Compare a sermon by Henry van Dyke from Matt. 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

One of the books which used to be considered indispensable to the library of a well-furnished clergyman in the last century was called "The Whole Duty of Man." It is an excellent, large volume, of many pages. But the Divine Master has put the essence of it into this one word—Salt. —BARTON, *Pulpit Power*, p. 762.

What conclusions do you draw from these two uses of a biblical figure for a sermon subject?

IX. **Plan.**—Note the following:

A. The "parable of the Light" is explained as a true "parable of Christ." Is this necessary? Or is it perfectly obvious, and therefore is explanation needless? Is it too long? Are any accidental items introduced or enlarged upon?

B. The second point unfolds the truth in the parable in "its complete simplicity." Is this done with sufficient detail and clearness?

C. The third point applies the truth, which has been discussed briefly, to various Christian experiences and teachings, showing how it makes them reasonable and real.

D. Bishop Brooks might have discussed the second point at length, justifying by argument the truth that the world belongs essentially to God. Would this have made the applications clearer or more cogent?

E. This brief discussion of a truth and its immediate application to various phases of human experience we call the *deductive method*. Little time is spent in the explanation of the truth or its justification; instead, it is regarded as practically axiomatic; the main part of the sermon is devoted to the application of the truth to life. In case the general truth is not firmly established with the congregation, is this *deductive method* ineffective? In case the spheres of application are not well chosen how may the deductive method fail?

F. The third division, the applications, has two divisions, general and specific. Is this division accurately preserved in the arrangement of items that follows? Do you feel that Bishop Brooks studied with care the selection and arrangement of the specific applications? Or do you feel that they are presented in his sermon as they rushed into his mind in the glow of his first attack upon his subject, without discriminating study? If you were to (*a*) omit any, (*b*) include any, (*c*) change the proportion of time given to any, or (*d*) rearrange the order of presentation, what would you do? Give the reason for any changes.

G. As a result of this study what conclusions do you arrive at concerning the plan of the sermon? What are the characteristics of an effective plan?

X. **Material.**—It is instantly apparent that this is a doctrinal sermon. It starts with the dominant teaching that life essentially belongs to God and in all its highest

expressions and realizations it is only expressing its divine character. Note carefully the full significance of the statements (p. 47, ll. 138–48). The doctrine comprehends many others touched upon in the progress of the sermon: Christian character ("The fullest Christian experience is simply the fullest life"); salvation or conversion ("There is no transportation to a foreign region"). Compare Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, I, 31:

> I endeavored to impress you yesterday with the idea that preaching is the exertion of the living force of men upon living men for the sake of developing in them a higher manhood. I say a higher manhood rather than a higher life, because I do not wish to separate a Christian life as something distinct from the movement of the whole being.

Also Bushnell: "The holy Scriptures seem in all possible ways to be holding up the dignity of common life."[1]

What other essential Christian doctrines are involved in this sermon? Would the average hearer have thought that he was listening to a doctrinal sermon? How does Brooks's theology agree with that of Spurgeon and Newman (reserve this for later discussion)?

XI. **Illustrations.**—This sermon is one of the most profitable available examples of the use of illustrative material and should be carefully studied especially for the purpose of comparison later with Spurgeon (p. 121).

Note especially the treatment of the figure of the light (p. 44, ll. 46–51). Observe the completeness with which the three sentences cover the figure or

[1] "Every Man's Life a Plan of God," in *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 11.

"parable" of light as set forth in the characteristic differences of *morning*, *noon*, and *night*. These three divisions instantly assure the *unity* of the treatment of the figure. The first sentence is the simplest, as it should be to secure climax; we have only the simple words, "fills the east with glory." The second sentence contains more items. Study carefully the three adjectives, *flooded*, *beaten*, *quivering*. Do these describe accurately the condition of a heated plain lying beneath the noonday sun? Suggest better adjectives. Do the three gather force from their arrangement? Transpose them thus: *quivering*, *beaten*, *flooded*. Has anything been lost? Could the plain quiver before it had been flooded with the hot sunshine? The third sentence contains the most items. Note the two verbs, *hush*, *elevate*. Do these accurately describe the influence of twilight and evening upon a sensitive spirit? Suggest other verbs that would be more accurate or vivid. Study the three nouns, *mystery*, *sweetness*, *suggestiveness*. Are these appropriate? Are they well arranged? Do you think that these three sentences came quite spontaneously, or did Bishop Brooks work on them? In either case, was he a literary artist? Is the sermon a work of art?

Now read carefully page 44, lines 51–64, and page 46, lines 133–36. This is a clear statement of the fundamental principles that should govern the use of illustrations in preaching. We note the following items, which will be treated more fully on pages 237–46.

A. Never allow yourself to be drawn away from the one central truth in the illustration. The danger that we shall do this is constant. An illustration is useful only so long as the one supreme idea in it is kept in view.

B. Every figure, pressed too far, inevitably breaks down, and becomes thereby a source of weakness in the sermon. The illustrations are therefore one of the most vulnerable places in the sermon. At first glance it seems easy to use them; as a matter of fact, it is exceedingly difficult.

C. There is great danger is dwelling too long on any illustration. Bishop Brooks presented the figure of light in vivid beauty; then he left it in the effort to make clear the one truth that it had set forth.

Note the reference to Matthew Arnold (p. 48, ll. 186, 187). Is the use of "doubting lips" justifiable?

## SERMON STUDY IV

### BEECHER, "WHAT IS CHRIST TO ME?"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Henry Ward Beecher, American, Congregationalist, was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, June 24, 1813. He was the son of Rev. Lyman Beecher, a preacher of national distinction, and was the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. His mother was a woman of the finest nature and gave to her children their love of art and culture. In 1830 Henry Ward Beecher entered Amherst College, graduating four years later. He then became a student in Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, of which his father was president. He began his ministry in Lawrenceburg, Indiana; removed in 1839 to Indianapolis; and in 1847 was called to be pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, to the pulpit of which he gave world-wide fame for the remainder of his life. He died in 1887. He was generally considered while living as the most distinguished "orator" of the American pulpit, and this judgment has not been altered since his death. His service to the cause of human freedom and to his country during the Civil War merits the highest praise.

Mr. Beecher's method of sermon preparation—he was always Mr. and never Dr. Beecher—was characteristic of the man. He has described it himself as follows:

> I have half a dozen or more topics lying loose in my mind through the week; I think of one or another, as occasion may

serve, anywhere,—at home, in the street, in the horse-car. I rarely know what theme I shall use until Sunday morning. Then, after breakfast, I go into my study, as a man goes into his orchard: I feel among these themes as he feels among the apples, to find the ripest and the best; the theme which seems most ripe I pluck; then I select my text, analyze my subject, prepare my sermon, and go into the pulpit to preach it while it is fresh.

Commenting on this statement, which Mr. Beecher had made to him, Dr. Lyman Abbott says:

In this preparation he wrote the introduction and the earlier portions of his sermon in full, but as the time for the church service grew near, the writing was more abbreviated; then mere heads were jotted down, in single sentences, or perhaps single words; and at last, almost as the bell began to toll, he caught up his unfinished manuscript, walked with long, rapid strides to the church, edged his way through the throng, with a greeting here and there to a special friend, dropped his soft felt hat by the side of his chair, put his notes on the table beside him, sometimes added to them with a pencil while the choir was singing the anthem. When the time for the sermon came, the notes lay on the open Bible before him. He read in a quiet manner, not always easily audible throughout the church unless it were notably still, the first and fully written pages, dropped his manuscript to throw in a thought that flashed upon him, came back to it again, dropped it again, presently dropped it altogether, either not to recur to it at all, or to recur to it only to catch from some word or sentence a hint as to the next point in the current of his thought. To the careless it seemed that Mr. Beecher's preparation of his sermon was left to Sunday morning; in fact, he rarely if ever in his ordinary preaching treated a theme until he had given to it weeks of meditation.

The best available biography is *Henry Ward Beecher* by Lyman Abbott, 1903. The quotations above are from pages 118 and 119 of this volume. The familiar pictures of Mr. Beecher show him as a man of strong features and commanding presence, and one of the most characteristic of these represents him seated, looking out over the water to the distant sky line of New York, with all of which he was familiar and which he loved with intense loyalty. He was a "great human."

The sermon studied is from *Plymouth Pulpit: Sermons Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, by Henry Ward Beecher*, I, 303. It was delivered on Sunday morning, December 21, 1873, and was reported by T. J. Ellinwood, who was for years Mr. Beecher's stenographer.

## WHAT IS CHRIST TO ME?

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.—Col. 1:10.

This is to be interpreted by such passages as that of the 27th verse: "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

One of the passages fitly interprets the other. We are to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing"; and Jesus Christ as formed in us, "the hope of glory," interprets that God to us, and stands for him. The command to grow in the knowledge of God requires only a very few words; but the thing itself is the labor of ages; and, as in all sciences and in every school of philosophy, growth has been hindered by wrong methods, so that science began and went out, almost, with Aristotle, because false methods were applied; and it waited for the days of Bacon and the modern school before any great advance was made. History was but clustering fables until the philosophic methods of history were developed. And, as the development of science in every department—for instance, physiology, the science of the mind, etc.—stumbled and blundered by wrong methods, coming continually short, and began to brighten and bear fruit so soon as right methods were found out and made use of; so the knowledge of God has waited through the ages for right methods. It has been pursued in various ways; and yet no other subject so important has received so little increment, compared with the time during which the world has existed and the human mind has been active, as this one matter—the knowledge of God.

It is made the central and critical relation of Christ to every human soul. As we are to be saved by our faith in Jesus Christ, it becomes a matter of transcendent importance to each one of us to know Christ, to increase in our knowledge

of him, and therefore to know how to increase in that knowledge. The fact is that very few persons now have any view or experience in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ as the interpreter of God's nature, which answers at all either to the experience of the apostles, or to that which they aimed at in their preaching.

The question therefore comes up with emphasis: Is Jesus Christ so presented to men that they may reap the best fruits of faith? Are the methods of presentation the wisest and the best? Are the modes of study which are employed by the great mass of Christian people the best and the wisest? It is to the consideration of this general subject that I shall devote this morning's discourse.

To his personal disciples the relation of Christ was one of intense admiration and love. With all the glow and enthusiasm which belongs to heroic friendship, they loved Jesus during his life. Not only that, but after the bewilderment of his crucifixion was over, and after his resurrection became an article of assured faith to them, they continued to have an intense personal love for him. It was in each case the fidelity of a clansman to his chief. It was the enthusiasm of a man in regard to some high and noble friend.

The expectation, doubtless, of soon seeing him again increased the intensity of this feeling—for all the early years of Christendom were passed in the expectation of the immediate coming of Christ. It was the whole aim of the apostles to inspire in every man just this personal love and enthusiasm toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does it exist? I do not ask whether men say "Lord, Lord," enough. I do not ask whether men say they are going to act thus and so "for Christ's sake"; that they must "honor Christ"; that they must "glorify Jesus." Of words there are enough. The question is far deeper than that. Is there an intense inward consciousness of the reality, the presence, the love, and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives

to many men such an impulse that they can say that their "life is hid with Christ in God?"

Is there any such affection as this? Christ is the *neighbor* of a great many persons: does he abide in their households? Does he come into their midst? Does he dwell with them, and do they dwell with him? An intense personal love for the Lord Jesus Christ being the germinant element, the beginning experience, so far as his relation with men was concerned, it was to this that the apostles directed all their exertion. Hence, the first argument was an argument to disabuse the Jewish mind of its prejudices, and to show the serious-minded and moral men among the Jews that Jesus answered to the Old Testament description of the Messiah. Therefore, in the preaching and in the letters of the apostles, the views of Jesus Christ in relation to the prejudices and education of the Jews, in relation to the text of the Old Testament, in relation to the Jewish sacrifices, and in relation to foregone history, figure largely; and much of modern theology has been similarly occupied in presenting views of Jesus Christ in relation to certain national Jewish prejudices or notions.

Now, we have no such history as the Jews had; we have no such prejudices as they had; we have no such system as they had; we have no sacrifices; we have no altars; we have no priesthood; and to present Christ to us in the same way that he was presented to the Jews would be utterly void, unless by education you raised up an artificial condition which should be equivalent to that of the Jewish system. To a certain extent, this has been done. A most extraordinary thing is the artificial view into which men have been educated in order to make modern theology match with the relative arguments of the apostles on the subject of Christ's relations to the old Jewish national system. If I wished to stimulate our people in New England to heroism, do you suppose I would talk to them of Marathon and Pultowa? I would talk to them

of Bunker Hill and Lexington. If I were in Louisiana, and wished to inspire patriotism in the people there, I would not talk to them of Waterloo or of Wagram. I would talk to them of the battle of New Orleans and of the defeat of Packenham. It is not wise to attempt to inspire men with a heroic sense of the Lord Jesus Christ by preaching to them of an altar that for two thousand years has not existed; of a temple that was long ago in ruins; or of a ritual that they never saw, and that is a mere historical reminiscence. There must be an inspiration that shall open Christ up to our sympathy and reason as he was opened up to the sympathy and reason of the Jews. The genius of the philosophy of the apostles was peculiarly to develop the character of Christ in such a way as to meet the special national want which existed in their time; and the peculiar nature of our theology should be to meet that want which is the outgrowth of our national education.

As the Christian religion went forth and began to take hold of and subdue the mind of the world, it fell naturally first into the Greek line of thought; and it was made a matter largely of mental philosophy. During the period of the gestation of theology, Christ's nature, his relation to the Godhead, and his equality or non-equality with God—all these elements were profoundly discussed. Christ Jesus, when the Greek philosophy prevailed, was presented to the human mind in his dynastic relations, as a part of the reigning Deity—as belonging to the imperial God. More and more this took place, so that men had a psychological problem put to them instead of a solving process. They had an analyzed, arranged, classified God; and he was to them what, to a lover of flowers, is a *hortus siccus*—an herbarium in which last summer's plants have been skillfully culled and dried and arranged with reference to their genera and species and varieties. There they all are; none of them are growing; they are all dried; but they are scientific. The work of the Greek mind on the char-

acter of God was to analyze it, to classify its relations and parts, and to present it to the world as a problem in mental philosophy applied to theology.

Then, coming down still further, theology became Romanized. The Romans introduced the legal element into it. Instead of having a simple personal Christ as the Jews had; or instead of having a psychological problem such as the Greeks had, they had a scheme of theology which treated of the moral government of God, of the Law-giver, of the Atoner, of the Spirit, and of the Church. At length the administration of religion and theology fell into priestly hands, and became a power more universal and more imperious than any that ever was developed on earth in any other direction. The imagination, the reason and the conscience were all put into the hands of the priest who exercised authority over the soul, and personal liberty died out. Men believed in God as the Church believed in him. And the Church believed in God as they were taught to believe by the imperial view.

Thus, in the third estate, Christ, instead of being simply a person standing in personal relations to each man that sought him, had become the center of a great system of moral government; and away down to the early days of this generation we almost never heard of Christ as a person. During all my early life I heard of sinfulness—though that I did not need to hear about; for my own soul, and my own poor stumbling life taught me enough on that subject. I also heard of the Atonement of Christ. But almost never did I hear of *Christ*. He was something that I was to find after I had got through certain enigmas; after I had, as it were, been initiated, and had gone through certain stages, and become a sort of mason. Religion was regarded as a kind of masonry in which one passed in at a certain gate, giving a certain signal, and took certain successive steps, and rose through certain gradations, and at last came to a point where Christ

was opened up to him. After the law had been shown to me, and I had gone through a process of repentance, and become regenerated, there was to be a Christ for me; but Christ was never presented to me when I was young as a great influencing power operating in *advance* of all other things. I had come to my majority before I had such a view of Christ. One of the most extraordinary epochs of my life was the hour (I never knew how nor exactly why) in which I discovered, or in which it dawned upon me, that I had a *personal Christ* as something separable from problems of mental philosophy, from the church, from any plan of salvation, and from any doctrine of atonement—a living, loving God, whom I had a right to approach in my own personality, and who had toward me such feelings as made me welcome to come to him at any time. The opening of that conception to me was the beginning of the revolution of my life. I should not have been here to-day, nor through the last quarter of a century, but for that single view of Christ which rose upon me with healing in its beams.

A personal Saviour, to be studied and learned, must be presented in such a way that we can make him personal to ourselves. This was done in part by that great revulsion called the *Protestant Reformation*. Salvation by faith was the glory of Luther. He unquestionably had in his own inward experience the right element; but it does not follow that the presentation of it was the one which was the best adapted to enlighten the whole world. Experience has shown that it was not. It was much covered with habits and prejudices and philosophies; for no man can throw off in a moment the opinions of the ages of which he is a child and product. Everywhere, when a philosophy is renounced, it still lives. Its detritus remains. Men find a thousand prejudices and habits clinging to them after they have abandoned the beliefs which begot these incumbrances.

When a philosophy has been set aside the fruit stays by, for good if it was good, and for bad if it was bad.

In the main, by the Protestant system Christ was presented as a part of theology in a certain way; and although the element Christ Jesus, as a living God, was the glory and the secret power of that system, yet it was not brought out and freed from the accumulations and incrustations of the ages.

We come, now, to the truth that a personal Saviour must be studied from the stand-point of one's own soul. It is not the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, it is not his relation to the divine government, it is not his relation to a system of theology, but it is his relation to *you*, as representing very God, that you are to study. His personal relation to your wants—to your understanding, to your imagination, to your moral sense, to your yearnings, to your strivings—this is the only point at which you can come to any knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that shall be available to you.

This will bring us back to the apostolic experience. It will bring us back to the interior element of Christianity as distinguished from those external elements which have been thrown around about it. It would bring us from Jewish misconceptions, from the Grecized view, from the Roman view, and from the heterogeneous modern view, to the Lord Jesus himself, the Saviour of the world, by faith in whom each soul is to be redeemed.

First, we are to understand that he is to our thought God—by which I do not mean that any man can define God. No man can take a pencil and mark the features of Jehovah, and say, "Thus far is God, and no farther." How poor a God must that be whom I can understand! He would be no larger than the measure of my thought—and that would be small indeed. No man can limit and define God. After all intellectual statements have been made, after all definitions have been given, immensely more is left untouched than

has been touched. But the functions of the divine nature, the quality of that nature and its moral essence, one may suspect or know without comprehending all of God.

Bring me but a glass of water and I know what water is. I may not know, if I am untraveled, what are the springs in the mountain, what are cascades, what are the streams that thunder through deep gorges, what are broadening rivers, what are bays, or what is the ocean; and yet I may know what water is. A drop on my finger tells me its quality. From that I know that it is not wood, that it is not rock, that it is not air, that it is not anything but water.

I am not able by searching to find out God unto perfection; and yet I know that, so far as I have found him out, and so far as he is ever going to be found out, whatever there is in goodness, whatever there is in sweetness, whatever there is in patience; whatever can be revealed by the cradle, by the crib, by the couch, by the table; whatever there is in household love and in other loves; whatever there is in heroism among men; whatever there is of good report; whatever has been achieved by imagination or by reason; whatever separates man from the brute beast, and lifts him above the clod—I know that all these elements belong to God, the eternal and universal Father. Although I may not be able to draw an encyclopediac circle and say, "All inside of that is God, and anything outside of it is not God"; yet I know that everything which tends upward, that everything which sets from a lower life to a higher, that everything which leads from the basilar to the coronal, that everything whose results are good, is an interpretation of God, who, though he may be found to be other than we suppose, will be found to be not less, but more glorious than we suspect.

Every man, then, is to understand that Christ represents God so far as the human mind is in a condition to understand and take him in. I find no difficulty in saying that Christ is God, because I never undertake to weigh God with scales or

to measure him with compasses. There are men who have sat down and ciphered God out; they have figured up the matters of omnipotence, of omniscience and of omnipresence; they have marked the limits to which the Divine power can go; they can tell why God may do so and so, and why he may not do this, that or the other; and I can understand how they should raise objections to saying that Christ is God. To some extent we may comprehend the divine nature in certain points; but God is too large, not simply for the intelligence of individuals, but for the intelligence of the race itself, though it has been developed for many ages. If it should be developed through countless ages to come, it would still be incapable of understanding God, so vast and voluminous is he; and yet I find no difficulty in saying, "Christ is God." So far as the human mind is competent to understand the constituent elements of the divine nature they are in Jesus Christ, and he presents them to us.

I draw out from my pocket a little miniature, and look upon it, and tears drop from my eyes, What is it? A piece of ivory. What is on it? A face that some artist has painted there. It is a radiant face. My history is connected with it. When I look upon it tides of feeling swell in me. Some one comes to me and says, "What is that?" I say, "It is my mother." "Your mother! I should call it a piece of ivory with water-colors on it." To me it is my mother. When you come to scratch it and analyze it and scrutinize the elements of it, to be sure it is only a sign or dumb show, but it brings to me that which is no sign nor dumb show. According to the law of my mind, through it I have brought back, interpreted, refreshed, revived, made potent in me, all the sense of what a loving mother was.

So I take my conception of Christ as he is painted in dead letters on dead paper; and to me is interpreted the glory, the sweetness, the patience, the love, the joy-inspiring nature of God; and I do not hesitate to say, "Christ is my God,"

just as I would not hesitate to say of that picture, "It is my mother."

"But," says a man, "you do not mean that you really sucked at the breast of that picture?" No, I did not; but I will not allow anyone to drive me into any such minute analysis as that.

Now I hold that the Lord Jesus Christ, as represented in the New Testament, brings to my mind all the effluence of brightness and beauty which I am capable of understanding. I can take in no more. He is said to be the express image of God's glory. He transcends infinitely my reach; for when I have gone to the extent of my capacity there is much that I cannot attain to.

When, therefore, Christ is presented to me I will not put him in the multiplication table, I will not make him a problem in arithmetic or mathematics; I will not stand and say, "How can three be one?" or "How can one be three?" I will interpret Christ by the imagination and the heart. Then he will bring to me a conception of God such as the heavens never, in all their glory, declared; such as the earth has never revealed, either in ancient or modern times. He reveals to us a God whose interest in man is inherent, and who through his mercy and goodness made sacrifices for it. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it. What is the only begotten Son of God? Who knows? Who cares to know? That his only begotten Son is precious to him we may know, judging from the experience of an earthly father; and we cannot doubt that when he gave Christ to come into life, and humble himself to man's condition, and take upon himself an ignominious death, he sacrificed that which was *exceedingly dear* to him. And this act is a revelation of the feeling of God toward the human race.

There had sat and thundered Jupiter, striking the imagination of men; there had been the Grecian deities, good and bad, reaching through the great mythological realm of the

fancy; there had been the grotesque idols of the heathen; these things had given to the world a thousand strange phantasies and vagrant notions; but nothing had given men a true conception of God until Christ came, declaring that God so loved the world that he gave the best thing he had to save it.

Now, measure what the meaning of that truth is. Away, ye Furies! Away, ye Fates! Away, ignoble conceptions of Greece, of Rome, and of outlying barbarous nations! Heaven is now made radiant by the Son of God, teaching us that at the center of power, of wisdom and of government, sits the all-paternal love, and that it is the initial of God. It is the Alpha and the Omega; and the literature and lore of divinity must be interpreted according to its genius. God so loved the world, before it loved him, knowing its condition, that he gave his only Son to die for it. This is the interpretation of the everlasting sacrifice of the divine nature in the way of loving. Jesus Christ epitomizes, represents, interprets God to us as the central fountain, source and supply of transcendent benevolence and love in the universe. This intense interest and love in God works to the development of every soul toward him. It is not divine indifference. It is not divine good-nature. It is not divine passivity. It is a parent's desire for a child's development from evil toward goodness, toward purity, toward sweetness, toward godliness. God is one who is laborious and self-sacrificing, seeking the race, not because they are so good, but to make them good, stimulating them, inspiring them, and desiring above all things else that they shall be fashioned away from the animal toward his sonship. That is the drift and direction of the divine government.

It is said that to preach God's love effeminates the mind. It is said that it makes men careless and indifferent. It is said, "If God is a great central Love, why, then, it does not make much difference how men live." Ah! the truth as it

is set forth in the Bible is, that God loves in such a way as to urge men forward to that which is high and ennobling. Through love he chastens and pierces by way of stirring men up. By joy and by sorrow, by pleasure and by pain, by all means, God seeks to make the objects of his love worthy of himself. He that loves only to degrade is infernal. He that loves so that the object of his love withers under his influence loves as fire loves, consuming to ashes that which it loves. No one has true love who does not know that it is the inspiration of nobility; that it is a power which is carrying its object upward, being willing to suffer for the sake of lifting it higher and higher. That is the test of man's love, because God has given it to us as the test of his own love.

Every man, then, is to seek Jesus Christ personally. The way of salvation is the way of heart—faith in Christ. He represents God, and God represents love, and love represents development from sinfulness toward righteousness. And every man is to seek this Christ as interpreting God to us for his own sake. The perception of Christ's relations to one's own salvation is a thousand times more important than a perception of his relation to the Old Testament, or to the Godhead, or to the theology, or to the history of the church. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" that the apostle was to preach. Your own want—the want of your character and of your whole nature—that is to be the starting-point in every investigation in this direction. "What is Christ to me?" is to be the question.

When for ten days the *Java* had sailed without an observation, and when, at last, there came an opportunity to take one, did the captain take it for the sake of navigation at large? No; he took it to find out first of all where the good ship was on her voyage. Not that navigation was of no account, not that astronomy was of no account; but that observation was taken for the sake of that particular ship on that particular voyage.

I do not undertake to say that there is nothing else to be thought of in the world but one's own spiritual condition; but I do say that the prime consideration with every man is, "What is Christ to my soul?" How does your soul need Christ? How does he interpret himself as being the outlet of every want in your nature? These are the all-important inquiries which concern you.

No man can have another man's Christ—if you will not misunderstand my words and pervert my meaning. As a physician is who stands over you in sickness, so is Christ Jesus. What to your thought a teacher is who labors with you according to your ignorance, that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

When, during the famine in Ireland, the benevolent people of this country sent provision to the thousands who were starving there, a government ship—a man-of-war—was appointed to take it over; and never was there an armament that slew prejudices and animosities as did the cargo which was discharged out of the sides of that old frigate. But when the vessel arrives in Ireland, we will suppose one set of the inhabitants go down to the shore where she lies at anchor, and say, "This thing is to be looked at in the light of naval architecture." Another set go down, and say, "A government vessel! What is the relation of government to the wants of a people who are suffering from hunger? What business has a government to send provision in a war-ship?" They are disposed to discuss the question in the light of civil policy. Another set go down and say, "Wheat and potatoes: what is the excellence of wheat compared with that of potatoes, chemically considered?" The suffering men stand on the shore and cry, "Our fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters are dying for the want of food: unload! *unload!* UNLOAD!" But those who are standing by interpose, and say, "You do not believe in chemistry; you do not believe in civil government; you do not believe in architecture!" I preach Christ as every man's Saviour; as his strength;

as his bread; as his water; as his life; as his joy; as his hope. I say everything is trash as compared with that; and men exclaim, "Loose theology! He does not care for the church, nor for ordinances, nor for the Trinity, nor for the atonement, nor for a plan of salvation!"

When men are starving it is not the time to talk of ships, of navigation, or of what government may or may not do: it is the time to talk of wheat and meat. Corn and beef are better than politics under such circumstances.

Now, when men are under heavy burdens that they do not know how to bear, is there a Burden-Bearer anywhere? When men are unillumined, is there any Light in this world? When men are in trouble, and cannot see their way out of it, and they say, in despair, "The day of my birth be cursed, and the day of my death be blessed!" is there any Hope that shines forth and makes the darkness of the future bright as a morning star in the horizon? Is there anything in the Lord Jesus Christ that you need? Is there anything for you, who are sorrowing for your companion that has been smitten down; for you, whose affection has been disappointed; for you, who are heartsick from hope deferred; for you, whose affairs are all in a tangle; for you, whose prosperity is like pasture-ground which the plow has turned upside down to prepare for new and unknown harvests? Is there anything in him for me—for me, that am poor; for me, that am desolate, for me, that am stripped and peeled of all that makes life desirable; for me, that am smitten and cast down; for me, that am struggling to perform a task that I do not understand; for me, who am aiming at that which I cannot reach; for me, whose days are well-nigh spent; for me, a little child; for me, a boy at school; for me, an apprentice; for me, a pauper; for me, that am to be hanged? That is the soul's cry through life.

What does it matter to me that the Jews had a system, that the Greeks had a system, or that the Romans had a

system? Let their systems go to the dust. What do I care for such things when I am rolling in pain that I cannot endure? Then, if there is anything in the universe which will relieve my suffering, I want it.

Have you ever had a fever? Have you ever tossed all night with hateful dreams, and waked in the morning parched and well-nigh perishing with thirst? Have you ever felt as though you would give the world for a drop of water? Go to a person who is in that condition, and read to him the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, or *Romeo and Juliet*. What does he care for them? "Oh, for a drop of water!" is his cry. Read to him *Bacon's Maxims*. What does he care for *Bacon's Maxims?* He cries, "Water!" Read to him the most exquisite literature the world has known. He will not listen. "Give me water! Give me water!" he says. The whole sum of his being is concentrated in that one want, and it dominates. The way to give him other things is to supply first that overmastering want.

When men are in their sins, and they wander, wayward, in the dark, longing for something—they know not what, Christ says, "I am the Way; I am the Light." Art thou the way out of this tangle? Art thou my unclouded light which no storm can dissipate or blow out? When men are hungering, art thou, Jesus, the soul's food? Is there something in God as interpreted by Christ that shall meet every want in the human soul? Yes, there is just that.

Are you a little child? The glory of the incarnation is that Christ was a little child. There is no little child in whose path Jesus has not walked, or one that was exactly like it. He knows every child's experience—his hopes and fears; his expectations and disappointments; his pleasures and pains; his joys and sorrows. It may not help him that he knows your troubles; but it helps you to know that he knows them.

Christ was in his early life subject to his parents. Even after he was filled with the divine afflatus, so that he disputed with the doctors in the temple, he went back home, and submitted himself to the control of his father and mother. With conscious power and glory, he put himself under the direction of those who were inferior to him, willingly and cheerfully.

If you are toiling in an unrequited way in life, think how Christ labored. Old Galilee was mixed up with all manner of detritus. People from every nation under the Roman banner had flocked thither. A vast cosmopolitan population was gathered there. And there Christ was brought up as a Jew. He learned the trade which his father followed. He worked at the bench. When a young man, by laboring with his hands he scraped up a small competence with which to buy his daily bread. Every man that toils, then, has in Christ one that has been like him.

Are you turmoiled and driven hither and thither, not knowing where to lay your head? The Son of man had not where to lay his head. The birds had nests; the foxes had holes; the very sea was allowed to rest at times; but Jesus almost never rested. By day and by night, and everywhere, he was a man of sorrow and of toil.

Are you abiding at home? Are you happy and contented? There are no sweeter pictures in the Bible than those which portray the joys of Christ at the festivities which he attended, and in the thousand ways in which he made others happy. In creating so much happiness he could not but have been happy himself.

Christ stands for men in all their relations. He stands for them in their crimes. I do not know why it should be so, but it seems to me there is nothing else—not even the scene of the cross itself—that touches me so much as the incident which took place when he came back to Capernaum and was surrounded by rich men, and was invited to go to a feast in a nobleman's house. As he entered, a crowd, among whom

were publicans and harlots, pressed in after him, and actually sat down at the table with him, unbidden, and ate with him. Those who were looking on stood, and pointed, and said, "See, he eateth with publicans and sinners!" Eating with another is a sign of hospitality and friendship and fidelity. Christ's conduct toward these poor creatures awoke a ray of hope in their most desperate depravity. It is this light which dawns in the midnight of the human soul that touches me. That which affects me is the voice that goes far down to the depths below where hope usually goes, and says to the child of sin and sorrow, "There is salvation for you." God does not cast away even the most depraved. The man who lies right by the lion's head; the man who is half brother to the wolf; the man who slimes his way with the worm—even he has One who thinks kindly of him, and says to him, "Thee, too, have I called; for thee I have a refuge and a remedy."

There was but one single class that Christ had no mercy for, and that was the class who had no mercy for themselves. I mean those men whose intellects were cultivated, whose imaginations were cultivated, whose moral sense was cultivated, but who turned all their talents into selfishness. They were dissipated by the top of the brain. Christ did not disregard dissipation of the passions; he regarded it as evil in the extreme; but he regarded the dissipation of the top of the brain as worse still. He said to those proud proprietaries, those men who had outward and not inward morals, those men who knew so much, and used their knowledge to oppress others with; who were so scrupulous about themselves, but did not care for anybody else—he said to them, pointing at those miserable harlots and those extortionate publicans, "You never do such things as they are guilty of doing, oh no; and yet they have a better chance of going to heaven than you have."

Even in the case of Zaccheus, when he said, "Lord, I am trying to do right," Christ said, "Come down; I will go to thy house." There was not a creature on earth who felt the need of a Saviour to whom Christ did not at once open the door of his heart; and the beauty of it was that Christ's heart stood open for all that were behind him, or before him, or on either side of him. When Christ came from the eternal sphere he brought with him as much of God as he could put into the conditions which he was to assume; as much as the human mind could comprehend; and though he laid aside that part of his being by reason of the circumstances in which he was to be placed, yet having entered upon our estate, when he spake, God spake; and when he showed mercy, it was an exhibition of God's mercy.

Now, have any of you, interested in the study of the texts of Scripture, considered the subject of your own want; of your own hope; of your own fear; of your own strivings; of your own unworthiness; of your own longings of soul; and have you said, "Lord, being what I am, what canst thou do for me?" Have you said, "What canst thou do for one who is slow and lethargic? What canst thou do for one who is always behind his conception?" There is a Christ for just such an one as that. Have you said, "Lord, what canst thou do for a fiery nature?" There is a divine power for those that are fiery. Have you said, "Lord, what canst thou do for me that am proud and hard?" There is a God of love and mercy for such as you are. Have you ever said, "What canst thou do for dispositions that are cold and selfish?" There is a medicine for just such dispositions. Have you said, "Lord, what canst thou do for those who are self-seeking?" There is provision for them, too.

Oh come, ye that are weary and heavy laden; oh come, all ye that are sinful; oh come, all ye who feel the burden of your sin: to you, to-day, I preach a risen Christ. I preach to-day no plan and no atonement, although there is a plan

and there is an atonement. But that which you want is a living Saviour. What you want is a person that your mind can think about as you think about your father and mother, your brother and sister, your friend, your physician, your deliverer, your leader, your guide.

Such is Christ. Such is he—ready to be over against every want. Being the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Alphabet, he is the sum of the whole literature. He is the highest of all. He is broader than the earth. He is universal in sympathy. He says to every man, "I am the Sun of righteousness."

What art thou, O Sun? Thou that bringest back from captivity the winter day; thou that teachest all the dead things in the earth to find themselves again; thou that dost drive the night away from the weary eyes of watchers; thou that art the universal bounty-giver; thou that dost travel endlessly carrying benefactions immeasurable, illimitable, beyond want and conception of want—thou art the figure that represents God; and God is as much greater in bounty and mercy and power than thou art as spirit is greater than matter. For the sun is a spark. Around about the brow of him that reigns are suns sparkling as jewels in a crown. What, then, is that God who is accustomed to speak of himself to us as the Sun of righteousness that arises with healing in his beams?

If there are those who have been accustomed to judge of their hope by their life alone; by whether they are living right or wrong; by whether they are living in a constant state of self-condemnation, and under a perpetual state of bondage to their conscience or not then they only know one thing—that they are *striving*, with a greater or less degree of earnestness. And they mourn, saying, "I am so insincere! I so often promise and do not fulfill!" Why, that is to be man.

The doctor has come. He has taken charge of the patient that has been near to the border of death. The crisis

is past; and he says to the child, "You are going to get well. I have got the upper hand of the disease." The next day, in the afternoon, the physician comes again; and the poor child lifts up its hands and says, "Doctor, I know that I am not going to get well. Not long after you went away, yesterday, a pain shot through me here; and I am sure I am not going to get well. I cannot sleep; I am very, very tired; and I can see no hope." "Well," says the doctor, "if you did not have pain you would not be sick. To be sick is to have poor digestion; it is to have that kingdom of the devil, the liver, the scene of all manner of impish tricks; it is to have various signs of weakness and disease; but I have begun to get the ascendancy, and you are going to recover. To-day you may walk across the room." The child walks feebly, and is faint, and goes back to the couch, and says, "It is just as I thought—I am not going to get well." The very weakness clouds the sight of a beginning of strength, and makes hope hang heavily. The despondency is a portion of the disease.

So it is with people in spiritual things; and oh, if the continuity of your fight against evil, and your salvation, depended upon your strength and fidelity, you might feel discouraged; but who is He that has called you? Who is He that has said, "I carry your lineaments on the palm of my hand, as one carries the portrait of a friend in his hand, and you are ever in my memory. A mother may forget her sucking child, but I will not forget thee." The eternal God, who bears up the orbs of the universe, with whom is no weariness, no variableness, no shadow of turning, has bowed down his love, and has shown himself to be God, in that he has had compassion on you; and your hope lies in him. It is because of the fidelity and grandeur of his continuing love, and not because you are virtuous and strong and skillful and wise, that you are to hope.

Sleep, child, though the storm rages. But suppose the little passenger, tossed about by the waves on the good staunch ship, should go on deck to see if it could not do something? What can a child do with the Atlantic Ocean? What can a child do with a scowling, howling northern storm? What can a child do with a ship that he does not understand? But there is the old sturdy captain, who is gruff to the passengers, and gruffer yet to nature. He weathers the storm, and brings the ship safe into harbor. Then, when all the smiles and glory of the continent seem to light up the great bay, how grateful everybody is! How willing the passengers all are to sign a letter congratulating the good captain!

God is the Captain who directs this great world-ship; and though he will not always speak when you want him to, yet he carries you, night and day, safely on the stormy sea; and ere long he will bring you safely into port; and when he has brought you in, and you see him as he is, no word can describe, no experience can interpret, nothing that has entered into the heart of man can conceive, the rapture and joy which we shall feel. When we are lifted up out of this lower realm, and we stand in the celestial sphere and behold our Deliverer, we shall be satisfied. O, word of wonder, to one wandering through the earth among men, and finding no home—*satisfied!* We do not yet know what that means; but you and I and all of us are rushing fast toward the day when we shall stand, without spot or blemish, and shall see him as he is, and shall be like him. We shall be satisfied; and that will be heaven!

GENERAL NOTES

**I. Impression.**—This sermon bears the clear impression of oral and oratorical factors. We imagine the quiet beginning, the frequent rush of speech as the delivery gathered power, the rapid work of the stenographer, and such revision as would be given somewhat hastily by a preacher who was not primarily interested in the finish of his literary style. This sermon is to be studied carefully when we seek to determine later the differences between the sermon and the oration. Therefore, report on this question: How does this discourse differ from an oration?

**II. Analysis.**—There are few indications of sermon divisions. (See p. 77, l. 214; p. 77, l. 232; p. 82, l. 394.)

Criticize the following analysis:

Introduction (p. 71, l. 1, to p. 72, l. 44)

I. How Christ has been presented to men (p. 72, l. 45, to p. 77, l. 213)
   - A. Vivid faith of disciples (p. 72, l. 45, to p. 73, l. 75)
   - B. Jewish view (p. 73, l. 75, to p. 74, l. 118)
   - C. Greek view (p. 74, l. 119, to p. 75, l. 139)
   - D. Roman view (p. 75, l. 140, to p. 75, l. 155)
   - E. Medieval view (p. 75, l. 156, to p. 76, l. 190)
   - F. Protestant view (p. 76, l. 191, to p. 77, l. 213)

II. Christ studied and known from personal relations to believer as very God (p. 77, l. 214, to p. 85, l. 510)
   - A. He is God to our thought (p. 77, l. 214, to p. 80, l. 342)
   - B. He reveals God as love (p. 80, l. 343, to p. 82, l. 393)
   - C. He is Savior from sin into righteousness, (p. 82, l. 394, to p. 85, l. 510)

III. Specific applications (p. 85, l. 511, to p. 90, l. 691)
- A. Children (p. 85, l. 511, to p. 86, l. 524)
- B. Unrequited toilers (p. 86, l. 525, to p. 86, l. 540)
- C. Home-makers (p. 86, l. 541 to p. 86, l. 546)
- D. Evildoers (p. 86, l. 547, to p. 87, l. 570)
- E. Those without mercy on themselves (p. 87, l. 571, to p. 88, l. 601)
- F. All sorts of hearers (p. 88, l. 602, to p. 90, l. 691)

Conclusion (p. 91, l. 692, to p. 91, l. 720)

Study the applications in Brooks and Beecher carefully. Which is the better arrangement? Do either or both show signs of disorder in this point?

III. **Title.**—Note the personal factor, *to me*. Does it mean, to Mr. Beecher personally? Or, to any particular hearer? Or has it no personal reference? Does this add to the interest of the title? Or would it make the title less attractive? (Who cares what anything means to someone else? Or does that depend on who that someone else is?) How often should personal factors be introduced into a subject or title?

IV. **Text.**—This is a case of the use of double texts. The central truth in the first is said to be more fully explained in the second. Do you feel that this is true? Or did Mr. Beecher force a complementary meaning upon the texts? What advantages do you see in double texts? What principles do you suggest governing their use?

V. **Subject.**—This is not specifically stated. From the three questions (p. 72, ll. 38–44), frame a subject.

VI. **Proposition.**—If you do not find a formal proposition, state one from page 82, lines 394–407.

VII. **Introduction.**—It occupies about one-fourteenth of the entire sermon. Is this about the right length? Compare with the introduction in Brooks. Which shows the greater care in preparation? Which really arrests the attention and creates interest more effectively?

VIII. **Conclusion.**—Do you feel the moving oratorical appeal of the conclusion? How does the use of the figure of the ship and the captain enhance its power?

XII. **Transitions.**—Of the fifty-four paragraphs in this sermon thirty-three have no word or phrase used specifically to effect the transfer of thought. Compare Bushnell and Brooks carefully on this point. Note the ways in which the *orator* is able to effect the transition of thought by the change of position or tone, the use of gesture, or other devices, which accomplish for the hearers what is attained for the reader by the use of literary forms. What might be a literary fault may therefore be overcome by the orator.

XIV. **Style.**—Here we have an excellent illustration of the difference between the carefully wrought and finished style of the preacher who has written his sermon and the preacher who uses the *ex tempore* method.

Study carefully the first paragraph. Read the third sentence (p. 71, ll. 8–15). Where is the corresponding term in the comparison, "as in all sciences"? Did Mr. Beecher get lost in this sentence? Does this indicate slipshod revision of the reported sermon? Now study the fifth sentence (p. 71, ll. 17–23), and see if it gathers up anything that was lost in the third. What is the relation of the third and fifth sentences? Are they redundant? Re-write the first paragraph, changing it

in any way that will preserve the thoughts presented in their clearness and force but aiming at greater conciseness.

Note the use of such words as *detritus* (p. 76, l. 203; p. 86, l. 527); *basilar*, *coronal* (p. 78, l. 268); *slimes his way* (p. 87, l. 567) (is *slime* a verb?); *divine afflatus* (p. 86, l. 520).

Note how (p. 78, ll. 252–63) in the rush of his thought, Beecher piles up ideas swiftly. This is a characteristic of the fervid oratorical style. It is not so much logical or restrained as the written style would demand; it depends for its effectiveness upon a forceful speaking person to carry it through. Compare also page 79, lines 308–10. Are these nouns well chosen and arranged, or did they simply rush out under the pressure of the moment? Compare them with Brooks (p. 44, ll. 48–51). From this study write such conclusions as seem to you valid concerning style in preaching.

XV. **General observations.**—Is this an "evangelistic" sermon even if it was not preached to those who never had heard the gospel? How large a factor in the sermon is the "personal message"? Note the personal factors brought forth: his experience of Christ; the steamer "Java," on which he was apparently a passenger; the intimate knowledge of men shown in the groups to whom the application is made; the miniature of his mother. How is this consistent with the personal factor in the title, already noted? Within what limits may personal items be brought into a sermon?

## SERMON STUDY V

### CHALMERS, "THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Thomas Chalmers,[1] founder and first leader of the Free Church of Scotland, was born March 17, 1780, and died May 30, 1847. He came from a family of high-minded and strict Scotch Calvinists. He was keenly interested in mathematics as a student at St. Andrews University. As a result of careful study into the doctrines of the Christian religion, he became one of the great preachers and pastors of modern times. His great parish work was done in Glasgow, where he developed a system of education and relief for the poor which escaped the evils of state charity and brought personal relations into the administration of this work. Later Dr. Chalmers became professor of moral philosophy and theology in St. Andrews University. He also led in the separation of the Free Church of Scotland from the General Assembly. Our interest in his many-sided activities is concerned with his preaching, of which the following sermon is an example. It may be found in his published works.

The suggestion out of which this sermon grew is most interesting. Dr. W. G. Blaikie says that Dr. Chalmers was once riding on top of a stagecoach when he suddenly saw the driver, without any apparent reason, apply the

[1] The *l* is silent; pronounced *Cha-mers*.

lash to one of the horses. In reply to a question as to his action, the driver told Dr. Chalmers that this horse had formed the habit of bolting at this particular spot, evidently being shy of some harmless object; so the driver thought he would give the horse something else to occupy his mind at that moment. This set Dr. Chalmers to thinking on the principle involved and out of it he wrought this sermon, showing how, by occupying a man's mind, the love of God would expel old evil desires.[1]

Dr. Chalmers, in sharp contrast with the habit of Mr. Beecher, wrote his sermons fully and read them in the pulpit. Yet he was able to handle his manuscript with such skill that he put into the delivery of his sermon all the passion and moving energy of the orator speaking extemporaneously. It will be well to remember that he preached to congregations of Scotch people, who are probably the world's best "sermon tasters," and who demand a high standard of reasoning wedded to dignified oratorical fervor in their preachers.

[1] Dargan, *History of Preaching*, II, 495.

## THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—I John 2:15.

There are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or, by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one. My purpose is to show, that from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual—and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it. After having accomplished this purpose, I shall attempt a few practical observations.

Love may be regarded in two different conditions. The first is, when its object is at a distance, and then it becomes love in a state of desire. The second is, when its object is in possession, and then it becomes love in a state of indulgence. Under the impulse of desire, man feels himself urged onward in some path or pursuit of activity for its gratification. The faculties of his mind are put into busy exercise. In the steady direction of one great and engrossing interest, his attention is recalled from the many reveries into which it might otherwise have wandered; and the powers of his body are forced away from an indolence in which it else might have languished; and that time is crowded with occupation, which but for some object of keen and devoted ambition, might have driveled along in successive hours of weariness and distaste—and though hope does not always enliven, and success does not always crown this career of exertion, yet in the midst of this very variety, and with the alternations

of occasional disappointment, is the machinery of the whole man kept in a sort of congenial play, and upholden in that tone and temper which are most agreeable to it. Insomuch, that if through the extirpation of that desire which forms the originating principle of all this movement, the machinery were to stop, and to receive no impulse from another desire substituted in its place, the man would be left with all his propensities to action in a state of most painful and unnatural abandonment. A sensitive being suffers, and is in violence if, after having thoroughly rested from his fatigue, or been relieved from his pain, he continue in possession of powers without any excitement to these powers; if he possess a capacity of desire without having an object of desire; or if he have a spare energy upon his person, without a counterpart, and without a stimulus to call it into operation. The misery of such a condition is often realized by him who is retired from business, or who is retired from law, or who is even retired from the occupations of the chase, and of the gaming-table. Such is the demand of our nature for an object in pursuit, that no accumulation of previous success can extinguish it—and thus it is, that the most prosperous merchant, and the most victorious general, and the most fortunate gamester, when the labour of their respective vocations has come to a close, are often found to languish in the midst of all their acquisitions, as if out of their kindred and rejoicing element. It is quite in vain with such a constitutional appetite for employment in man, to attempt cutting away from him the spring or the principle of one employment, without providing him with another. The whole heart and habit will rise in resistance against such an undertaking. The else unoccupied female, who spends the hours of every evening at some play of hazard, knows as well as you, that pecuniary gain, or the honorable triumph of a successful contest, are altogether paltry. It is not such a demonstration of vanity as this that will force her away from her dear

and delightful occupation. The habit cannot so be displaced, as to leave nothing but a negative and cheerless vacancy behind it—though it may so be supplemented as to be followed up by another habit of employment, to which the power of some new affection has constrained her. It is willingly suspended, for example, on any single evening, should the time that [is] wont to be allotted to gaming, require to be spent on the preparations of an approaching assembly.

The ascendant power of a second affection will do, what no exposition, however forcible, of the folly and worthlessness of the first, ever could effectuate. And it is the same in the great world. You never will be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits, by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way else, but by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man, intent and busied with the prosecution of his objects, to a dead stand, you have not merely to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects—but you have to encounter the pleasure which he feels in the very prosecution of them. It is not enough, then, that you dissipate the charm, by your moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. You must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influence, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former. It is this which stamps an impotency on all moral and pathetic declamation about the insignificance of the world. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration. If to be without desire and without exertion altogether is a state of violence and discomfort, then the present desire, with its correspond-

ent train of exertion, is not to be got rid of simply by destroying it. It must be by substituting another desire, and another line or habit of exertion in its place—and the most effectual way of withdrawing the mind from one object, is not by turning it away upon desolate and unpeopled vacancy —but by presenting to its regards another object still more alluring.

These remarks apply not merely to love considered in its state of desire for an object not yet obtained. They apply also to love considered in its state of indulgence, or placid gratification, with an object already in possession. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering—but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be thus destroyed, may be dispossessed—and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination—and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy— and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, but it is because drawn into the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or another, this is unconquerable. Its adhesion to that on which it has fastened the preference of its regards cannot willingly be overcome by the rending away of a simple separation. It can

be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have a something to lay hold of—and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, or of any, but it cannot be desolated of all. Let there be a breathing and a sensitive heart, but without a liking and without affinity to any of the things that are around it, and in a state of cheerless abandonment, it would be alive to nothing but the burden of its own consciousness, and feel it to be intolerable. It would make no difference to its owner, whether he dwelt in the midst of a gay and goodly world, or placed afar beyond the outskirts of creation, he dwelt a solitary unit in dark and unpeopled nothingness. The heart must have something to cling to—and never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself of all its attachments, that there shall not be one remaining object that can draw or solicit it.

The misery of a heart thus bereft of all relish for that which [is] wont to minister enjoyment is strikingly exemplified in those, who, satiated with indulgence, have been so belaboured, as it were, with the variety and poignancy of the pleasurable sensations they have experienced, that they are at length fatigued out of all capacity for sensation whatever. The disease of ennui is more frequent in the French metropolis, where amusement is more exclusively the occupation of higher classes, than it is in the British metropolis, where the longings of the heart are more diversified by the resources of business and politics. There are the votaries of fashion, who, in this way, have at length become the victims of fashionable excess—in whom the very multitude of their enjoyments has at last extinguished their power of enjoyment—who, with the gratifications of art and nature at com-

mand, now look upon all that is around them with an eye of tastelessness—who, plied with the delights of sense and of splendour even to weariness, and incapable of higher delights, have come to the end of all their perfection, and like Solomon of old, found it to be vanity and vexation. The man whose heart has thus been turned into a desert, can vouch for the insupportable languor which must ensue, when one affection is thus plucked away from the bosom, without another to replace it. It is not necessary that a man receive pain from anything, in order to become miserable. It is barely enough that he looks with distaste to everything—and in that asylum which is the respository of minds out of joint, and where the organ of feeling as well as the organ of intellect has been impaired, it is not in the cell of loud and frantic outcries where we shall meet with the acme of mental suffering. But that is the individual who outpeers in wretchedness all his fellows, who, throughout the whole expanse of nature and society, meets not an object that has at all the power to detain or to interest him; who neither in earth beneath, nor in heaven above, knows of a single charm to which his heart can send forth one desirous or responding movement; to whom the world, in his eye a vast and empty desolation, has left him nothing but his own consciousness to feed upon—dead to all that is without him, and alive to nothing but to the load of his own torpid and useless existence.

It will now be seen, perhaps, why it is that the heart keeps by its present affections with so much tenacity—when the attempt is, to do them away by a mere process of extirpation. It will not consent to be so desolated. The strong man, whose dwelling-place is there, may be compelled to give way to another occupier—but unless another stronger than he has power to dispossess and to succeed him, he will keep his present lodgment unviolable. The heart would revolt against its own emptiness. It could not bear to be so left

in a state of waste and cheerless insipidity. The moralist who tries such a process of dispossession as this upon the heart is thwarted at every step by the recoil of its own mechanism. You have all heard that Nature abhors a vacuum. Such at least is the nature of the heart, that though the room which is in it may change one inmate for another, it cannot be left void without the pain of most intolerable suffering. It is not enough then to argue the folly of an existing affection. It is not enough, in the terms of a forcible or an affecting demonstration, to make good the evanescence of its object. It may not even be enough to associate the threats and terrors of some coming vengeance, with the indulgence of it. The heart may still resist the every application, by obedience to which it would finally be conducted to a state so much at war with all its appetities as that of downright inanition. So to tear away an affection from the heart, as to leave it bare of all its regards and of all its preferences, were a hard and hopeless undertaking—and it would appear as if the alone powerful engine of dispossession were to bring the mastery of another affection to bear upon it.

We know not a more sweeping interdict upon the affections of Nature, than that which is delivered by the Apostle in the verse before us. To bid a man into whom there has not yet entered the great and ascendant influence of the principle of regeneration, to bid him withdraw his love from all the things that are in the world, is to bid him give up all the affections that are in his heart. The world is the all of a natural man. He has not a taste, nor a desire, that points not to a something placed within the confines of its visible horizon. He loves nothing above it, and he cares for nothing beyond it; and to bid him love not the world, is to pass a sentence of expulsion on all the inmates of his bosom. To estimate the magnitude and the difficulty of such a surrender, let us only think that it were just as arduous to prevail on him not to love wealth, which is but one of the things in the

world, as to prevail on him to set wilful fire to his own property. This he might do with sore and painful reluctance, if he saw that the salvation of his life hung upon it. But this he would do willingly, if he saw that a new property of tenfold value was instantly to emerge from the wreck of the old one. In this case there is something more than the mere displacement of an affection. There is the overbearing of one affection by another. But to desolate his heart of all love for the things of the world, without the substitution of any love in its place, were to him a process of as unnatural violence, as to destroy all the things he has in the world, and give him nothing in their room. So that, if to love not the world be indispensable to one's Christianity, then the crucifixion of the old man is not too strong a term to mark that transition in his history, when all old things are done away, and all things become new.

We hope that by this time, you understand the impotency of a mere demonstration of this world's insignificance. Its sole practical effect, if it had any, would be to leave the heart in a state which to every heart is insupportable, and that is a mere state of nakedness and negation. You may remember the fond and unbroken tenacity with which your heart has often recurred to pursuits, over the utter frivolity of which it sighed and wept but yesterday. The arithmetic of your short-lived days may on Sabbath make the clearest impression upon your understanding—and from his fancied bed of death, may the preacher cause a voice to descend in rebuke and mockery on all the pursuits of earthliness—and as he pictures before you the fleeting generations of men, with the absorbing grave, whither all the joys and interests of the world hasten to their sure and speedy oblivion, may you, touched and solemnized by his argument, feel for a moment as if on the eve of a practical and permanent emancipation from a scene of so much vanity. But the morrow comes, and the business of the world, and the objects of the world, and the

moving forces of the world come along with it—and the machinery of the heart, in virtue of which it must have something to grasp, or something to adhere to, brings it under a kind of moral necessity to be actuated just as before—and in utter repulsion towards a state so unkindly as that of being frozen out both of delight and of desire, does it feel all the warmth and the urgency of its wonted solicitations—nor in the habit and history of the whole man, can we detect so much as one symptom of the new creature—so that the church, instead of being to him a school of obedience, has been a mere sauntering place for the luxury of a passing and theatrical emotion; and the preaching which is mighty to compel the attendance of multitudes, which is mighty to still and solemnize the hearers into a kind of tragic sensibility, which is mighty in the play of variety and vigour that it can keep up around the imagination, is not mighty to the pulling down of strong-holds.

The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? If the throne which is placed there must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him, than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure his willing admittance, and taking unto himself his great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former,

but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away, and all things are to become new.

To obliterate all our present affections, by simply expunging them, and so as to leave the seat of them unoccupied, would be to destroy the old character, and to substitute no new character in its place. But when they take their departure upon the ingress of other visitors; when they resign their sway to the power and the predominance of new affections; when, abandoning the heart to solitude, they merely give place to a successor who turns it into as busy a residence of desire, and interest, and expectation as before—there is nothing in all this to thwart or to overbear any of the laws of our sentient nature—and we see how, in fullest accordance with the mechanism of the heart, a great moral revolution may be made to take place upon it.

This, we trust, will explain the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. The love of God, and the love of the world, are two affections, not merely in a state of rivalship, but in a state of enmity—and that so irreconcilable that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom. We have already affirmed how impossible it were for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it, and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted, and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one. Nothing can exceed the magnitude of the required change in a man's character—when bidden, as he is in the New Testament, to love not the world; no, nor any of the things that are in the world—for this so comprehends all that is dear to him in existence, as to be equivalent to a command of self-annihilation. But the same revelation which dictates so mighty an obedience, places within our reach as mighty an instrument of obedience. It brings for admittance, to the very door of our heart, an affection

which once seated upon its throne, will either subordinate every previous inmate, or bid it away. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind, him who made the world, and with this peculiarity, which is all its own—that in the Gospel do we so behold God, as that we may love God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners—and where our desire after him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every approach that is not made to him through the appointed Mediator. It is the bringing in of this better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God—and to live without hope, is to live without God, and if the heart be without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can dispost it from this ascendancy. It is when he stands dismantled of the terrors which belong to him as an offended lawgiver, and when we are enabled by faith, which is his own gift, to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and to hear his besecching voice, as it protests good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will to a full pardon, and a gracious acceptance—it is then, that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerated bosom. It is when released from the spirit of bondage, with which love cannot dwell, and when admitted into the number of God's children, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the spirit of adoption is poured upon us—it is then that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominant affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way in which deliverance is possible. And that faith which is revealed to us from heaven, as indispensable to a sinner's justification in the sight of God, is also the instrument of the greatest of all moral and spiritual achievements on a nature dead to the influence, and beyond the reach of every other application.

Thus may we come to perceive what it is that makes the most effective kind of preaching. It is not enough to hold out to the world's eye the mirror of its own imperfections. It is not enough to come forth with a demonstration, however pathetic, of the evanescent character of all its enjoyments. It is not enough to travel the walk of experience along with you, and speak to your own conscience, and your own recollection of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the deceitfulness of all that the heart is set upon. There is many a bearer of the Gospel message, who has not shrewdness of natural discernment enough, and who has not power of characteristic description enough, and who has not the talent of moral delineation enough, to present you with a vivid and faithful sketch of the existing follies of society. But that very corruption which he has not the faculty of representing in its visible details, he may practically be the instrument of eradicating in its principle. Let him be but a faithful expounder of the gospel testimony—unable as he may be to apply a descriptive hand to the character of the present world; let him but report with accuracy the matter which revelation has brought to him from a distant world—unskilled as he is in the work of so anatomizing the heart, as with the power of a novelist to create a graphical or impressive exhibition of the worthlessness of its many affections—let him only deal in those mysteries of peculiar doctrine, on which the best of novelists have thrown the wantonness of their derision. He may not be able, with the eye of shrewd and satirical observation, to expose to the ready recognition of his hearers the desires of worldliness—but with the tidings of the gospel in commission, he may wield the only engine that can extirpate them. He cannot do what some have done, when, as if by the hand of a magician, they have brought out to view, from the hidden recesses of our nature, the foibles and lurking appetites which belong to it. But he has a truth in his possession, which into whatever heart

it enters, will, like the rod of Aaron, swallow up them all—and unqualified as he may be, to describe the old man in all the nicer shading of his natural and constitutional varieties, with him is deposited that ascendant influence under which the leading tastes and tendencies of the old man are destroyed, and he becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us not cease, then, to ply the only instrument of powerful and positive operation, to do away from you the love of the world. Let us try every legitimate method of finding access to your hearts for the love of him who is greater than the world. For this purpose, let us, if possible, clear away that shroud of unbelief which so hides and darkens the face of the Deity. Let us insist on his claims to your affection—and whether in the shape of gratitude, or in the shape of esteem, let us never cease to affirm, that in the whole of that wondrous economy, the purpose of which is to reclaim a sinful world unto himself—he, the God of love, so sets himself forth in characters of endearment, that nought but faith, and nought but understanding, are wanting, on your part, to call forth the love of your hearts back again.

And here let us advert to the incredulity of a worldly man; when he brings his own sound and secular experiences to bear upon the high doctrines of Christianity—when he looks on regeneration as a thing impossible—when feeling as he does the obstinacies of his own heart on the side of things present, and casting an intelligent eye, much exercised perhaps in the observation of human life, on the equal obstinacies of all who are around him, he pronounces this whole matter about the crucifixion of the old man, and the resurrection of a new man in his place, to be in downright opposition to all that is known and witnessed of the real nature of humanity. We think that we have seen such men, who, firmly trenched in their own vigorous and homebred sagacity, and shrewdly regardful of all that passes before them through the week,

and upon the scenes of ordinary business, look on that transition of the heart by which it gradually dies unto time, and awakens in all the life of a new-felt and ever-growing desire towards God, as a mere Sabbath speculation; and who thus, with all their attention engrossed upon the concerns of earthliness, continue unmoved, to the end of their days, amongst the feelings, and the appetites, and the pursuits of earthliness. If the thought of death, and another state of being after it, comes across them at all, it is not with a change so radical as that of being born again, that they ever connect the idea of preparation. They have some vague conception of its being quite enough that they acquit themselves in some decent and tolerable way of their relative obligations; and that, upon the strength of some such social and domestic moralities as are often realized by him into whose heart the love of God has never entered, they will be transplanted in safety from this world, where God is the Being with whom it may almost be said, that they have had nothing to do, to that world where God is the Being with whom they will have mainly and immediately to do throughout all eternity. They admit all that is said of the utter vanity of time, when taken up with as a resting place. But they resist every application made upon the heart of man, with the view of so shifting its tendencies, that it shall not henceforth find, in the interests of time, all its rest and all its refreshment. They, in fact, regard such an attempt as an enterprise that is altogether aerial—and with a tone of secular wisdom, caught from the familiarities of every-day experience, do they see a visionary character in all that is said of setting our affections on the things that are above; and of walking by faith; and of keeping our hearts in such a love of God as shall shut out from them the love of the world; and of having no confidence in the flesh; and of so renouncing earthly things as to have our conversation in heaven.

Now, it is altogether worthy of being remarked of those men who thus disrelish spiritual Christianity, and, in fact, deem it an impractical acquirement, how much of a piece their incredulity about the demands of Christianity, and their incredulity about the doctrines of Christianity, are with one another. No wonder that they feel the work of the New Testament to be beyond their strength, so long as they hold the words of the New Testament to be beneath their attention. Neither they nor any one else can dispossess the heart of an old affection, but by the expulsive power of a new one—and, if that new affection be the love of God, neither they nor any one else can be made to entertain it, but on such a representation of the Deity, as shall draw the heart of the sinner towards him. Now it is just their unbelief which screens from the discernment of their minds this representation. They do not see the love of God in sending his Son into the world. They do not see the expression of his tenderness to men, in sparing him not, but giving him up unto the death for us all. They do not see the sufficiency of the atonement or of the sufferings that were endured by him who bore the burden that sinners should have borne. They do not see the blended holiness and compassion of the Godhead, in that he passed by the transgressions of his creatures, yet could not pass them by without an expiation. It is a mystery to them, how a man should pass to the state of godliness from a state of nature—but had they only a believing view of God manifest in the flesh, this would resolve for them the whole mystery of godliness. As it is, they cannot get quit of their old affections, because they are out of sight from all those truths which have influence to raise a new one. They are like the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, when required to make bricks without straw—they cannot love God, while they want the only food which can aliment this affection in a sinner's bosom—and however great their errors may be both in resisting the demands of the Gospel as imprac-

ticable, and in rejecting the doctrines of the Gospel as inadmissible, yet there is not a spiritual man (and it is the prerogative of him who is spiritual to judge all men) who will not perceive that there is a consistency in these errors.

But if there be a consistency in the errors, in like manner is there a consistency in the truths which are opposite to them. The man who believes in the peculiar doctrines, will readily bow to the peculiar demands of Christianity. When he is told to love God supremely, this may startle another; but it will not startle him to whom God has been revealed in peace, and in pardon, and in all the freeness of an offered reconciliation. When told to shut out the world from his heart, this may be impossible with him who has nothing to replace it—but not impossible with him, who has found in God a sure and a satisfying portion. When told to withdraw his affections from the things that are beneath, this were laying an order of self-extinction upon the man, who knows not another quarter in the whole sphere of his contemplation, to which he could transfer them—but it were not grievous to him whose view has been opened up to the loveliness and glory of the things that are above, and can there find for every feeling of his soul, a most ample and delighted occupation. When told to look not to the things that are seen and temporal, this were blotting out the light of all that is visible from the prospect of him in whose eye there is a wall of partition between guilty nature and the joys of eternity—but he who believes that Christ hath broken down this wall, finds a gathering radiance upon his soul, as he looks onwards in faith to the things that are unseen and eternal. Tell a man to be holy—and how can he compass such a performance, when his alone fellowship with holiness is a fellowship of despair? It is the atonement of the cross reconciling the holiness of the lawgiver with the safety of the offender, that hath opened the way for a sanctifying influence into the sinner's heart, and he can take a kindred

impression from the character of God now brought nigh, and now at peace with him. Separate the demand from the doctrine, and you have either a system of righteousness that is impracticable, or a barren orthodoxy. Bring the demand and the doctrine together—and the true disciple of Christ is able to do the one, through the other strengthening him. The motive is adequate to the movement; and the bidden obedience of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his strength, just because the doctrine of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his acceptance. The shield of faith, and the hope of salvation, and the Word of God, and the girdle of truth—these are the armour that he has put on; and with these the battle is won, and the eminence is reached, and the man stands on the vantage ground of a new field, and a new prospect. The effect is great, but the cause is equal to it—and stupendous as this moral resurrection to the precepts of Christianity undoubtedly is, there is an element of strength enough to give it being and continuance in the principles of Christianity.

The object of the Gospel is both to pacify the sinner's conscience, and to purify his heart; and it is of importance to observe, that what mars the one of these objects, mars the other also. The best way of casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and by the love of what is good, to expel the love of what is evil. Thus it is, that the freer the Gospel, the more sanctifying is the Gospel; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness. This is one of the secrets of the Christian life, that the more a man holds of God as a pensioner, the greater is the payment of service that he renders back again. On the tenure of "Do this and live," a spirit of fearfulness is sure to enter; and the jealousies of a legal bargain chase away all confidence from the intercourse between God and man; and the creature striving to be square and even with his Creator, is, in fact, pursuing

all the while his own selfishness instead of God's glory; and with all the conformities which he labors to accomplish, the soul of obedience is not there, the mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed under such an economy ever can be. It is only when, as in the Gospel, acceptance is bestowed as at present, without money and without price, that the security that man feels in God is placed beyond the reach of disturbance—or, that he can repose in him, as one friend reposes in another—or, that any liberal and generous understanding can be established betwixt them—the one party rejoicing over the other to do him good—the other finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of a gratitude, by which it is awakened to the charms of a new moral existence. Salvation by grace—salvation by free grace—salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God—salvation on such a footing is not more indispensable to the deliverance of our persons from the hand of justice, than it is to the deliverance of our hearts from the chill and the weight of ungodliness. Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and you raise a topic of distrust between man and God. You take away from the power of the Gospel to melt and to conciliate. For this purpose, the freer it is, the better it is. That very peculiarity which so many dread as the germ of antinomianism, is, in fact, the germ of a new spirit, and a new inclination against it. Along with the light of a free Gospel, does there enter the love of the Gospel, which in proportion as we impair the freeness, you are sure to chase away. And never does the sinner find within himself so mighty a moral transformation, as when under the belief that he is saved by grace, he feels constrained thereby to offer his heart a devoted thing, and to deny ungodliness.

To do any work in the best manner, you would make use of the fittest tools for it. And we trust, that what has been said may serve in some degree, for the practical guidance of

those who would like to reach the great moral achievement of our text—but feel that the tendencies and desires of Nature are too strong for them. We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God—and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our most holy faith. That denial of the world which is not possible to him that dissents from the Gospel testimony, is possible even as all things are possible, to him that believeth. To try this without faith, is to work without the right tool or the right instrument. But faith worketh by love; and the way of expelling from the heart the love which transgresseth the law, is to admit into its receptacles the love which fulfilleth the law.

Conceive a man to be standing on the margin of this green world; and that, when he looked towards it, he saw abundance smiling upon every green field, and all the blessings which earth can afford scattered in profusion throughout every family, and the light of the sun sweetly resting upon all the pleasant habitations, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society—conceive this to be the general character of the scene upon one side of his contemplation; and that on the other, beyond the verge of the goodly planet on which he was situated, he could descry nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it? Would he leave its peopled dwelling places, and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of nonentity? If space offered him nothing but a wilderness, would he for it abandon the homebred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exerted such a power of urgency to detain him? Would not he cling to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society—and shrinking away from the desolation that was beyond it,

would not he be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and to take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it?

But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blest had floated by; and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories, and its sounds of sweeter melody; and he clearly saw, that there, a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heartfelt joy spread itself among all the families; and he could discern there a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all. Could he further see, that pain and mortality were there unknown; and above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not, that what was before the wilderness, would become the land of invitation; and that now the world would be the wilderness? What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by space teeming with beatific scenes, and beatific society. And let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visible around us, still if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith, or through the channel of his senses—then, without violence done to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die unto the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—The solidity of this sermon is its outstanding characteristic. Chalmers has a message. He is dead-in-earnest in delivering it. How does his "passion" compare with that of Beecher? Note the psychological factor. Chalmers knows the human soul. The kindly temper is evident. He does not denounce. He seeks to plead and win by love. The doctrinal basis of the sermon is apparent. Is the sermon too "heavy"?

II. **Analysis.**—Compare this carefully with Brooks and Beecher.

III. **Title.**—Compare this with current "catchy" titles as they are announced on bulletin boards and in the press. How would this title serve in New York; in a country town; in a rescue mission today? What appeal does it contain for a *thoughtful* person?

IV. **Text.**—Would either of these texts have fitted the sermon better: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21); "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2)? Note that the discussion does not follow the order of thought in the text.

V. **Subject.**—The subject is not formally announced. It is contained in the title. Compare Robertson on this point.

VI. **Proposition.**—This is one of the best examples in homiletical literature of a proposition elaborately

wrought, clearly stated, immediately announced, well grounded in the knowledge of human personality, and appealing to anyone who is interested in the development of Christian experience. Study the first paragraph carefully to discover how it may be either clarified or condensed. If it can be improved, suggest the changes desired.

VII. **Introduction.**—This is an example of the identity of proposition and introduction—not an easy achievement. What is the argument for it? Against it? How often should it be undertaken?

VIII. **Conclusion.**—Compare the pictorial character of the conclusions in Beecher and Chalmers. Which is the more effective? Why? How often should such figures be used in conclusions?

X. **Material.**—Here we have an excellent example of a sermon which has been thoroughly thought out. The two chief sources are the conditions under which human experience develops and the Christian gospel as it furnishes the energy by which the development is accomplished. Compare this with Robertson's accurate study of obedience as the organ of spiritual knowledge. What conclusion does this suggest concerning the preacher's knowledge of the most fundamental principles of religion and life? Is the study of a person acting under the stimulus of a great love accurate? Note the study of the "retired" business man (p. 99, ll. 47–50); of ennui (p. 102, l. 158, to p. 103, l. 180); boyish appetites (p. 101, ll. 122–31); "nature abhors a vacuum" (p. 104, ll. 211–27); the willingness to accept a masterful motive and positive good (p. 105,

ll. 244–50). Complete the list and discuss Chalmers' mastery of the conditions and laws of spiritual development.

XII. **Transitions.**—Note the length of paragraphs, in comparison with Beecher. One-half of these have no specific connecting words.

XIII. **Unity.**—Study this sermon as a conspicuous example of logical unity. Do you find any digressions?

XIV. **Style.**—A notable and outstanding characteristic of Chalmers is his skill in the use of repetition.

He would take some one great thought and hold it up from every point of view, exhibiting all its sides, changing the phraseology and the illustration, but keeping that one thought ever before the hearer. The famous criticism of Robert Hall upon Chalmers perhaps exaggerated this characteristic.

In a conversation with a friend Hall said: "Did you ever know a man who had that singular faculty of repetition possessed by Dr. Chalmers? Why, sir, he often reiterates the same thing ten or twelve times in the course of a few pages. Even Burke himself had not so much of that peculiarity. His mind resembles . . . . a kaleidoscope. Every turn presents the object in a new and beautiful form, but the object presented is still the same. His mind seems to move on hinges, not on wheels. There is incessant motion, but no progress.[1]

There are certain uses of words that call for attention: *require* in the active voice (p. 100, l. 74); *dispost* (p. 108, l. 362); *wont* (p. 100, l. 74; p. 102, l. 159); *outpeer* (p. 103, l. 188); *occupier* (p. 103, l. 204); *rivalship* (p. 107, l. 332); *trenched* (p. 110, l. 450); *get quit* (p. 112, l. 515).

[1] Dargan, *History of Preaching*, II, 492.

## SERMON STUDY VI

### SPURGEON, "SONGS IN THE NIGHT"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, English Baptist, was born June 19, 1834, and died January 31, 1892. His father and grandfather were ministers. He began to preach at sixteen and his unusual gifts were quickly recognized. In 1854 he began a ministry in London which continued until his death. Great audiences crowded to hear him, especially in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, built for him in 1861. He lacked thorough training for his work; but his gifts were manifold: simple diction, quaint humor, passionate earnestness, profound sympathy, and natural oratory.

Spurgeon's published sermons reached an almost incredible number, sixty-three volumes, each containing from fifty-two to sixty sermons, of which more than a hundred million copies were sold. This sermon is from *Spurgeon's Sermons, Second Series*, II, 167–87.

He was intensely orthodox, a Calvinist, opposed to biblical criticism and all liberal tendencies in theology, and has been called "the last of the Puritans." He was unselfish, tireless in labor and devotion, and a passionate preacher of the gospel of grace.

No human computation will be able to reckon the number of weary toilers in the working and lower middle classes whose narrow surroundings have been brightened and idealized by the glow from the realm of faith to which he introduced

them. It was a great thing which this man achieved, to convince multitudes of struggling people, in the midst of a life which everything tended to belittle, that their character and career were a matter of infinite concern to the Power who made them, that they could not afford to treat sin lightly, or to throw themselves away as though they were of no account.[1]

Mr. Spurgeon's method of preparing his sermons is not to be recommended to others who are without his gifts. Generally he had a number of friends to see him on Saturday afternoons, and after tea he would frequently conduct family worship with them. They all understood that they must leave by seven o'clock sharp. Then, as he used to say, he began to get some food for his sheep. Sometimes the Sunday morning sermon came easily, and in an hour or two he had completed his preparation, having his notes written on half a sheet of ordinary notepaper, possibly overflowing to the other side of the sheet. The fact was that he believed in preparing himself rather than the sermon, and, as he wrote so much, his power of accurate expression was exceptional. The Sunday evening sermon was generally prepared on Sunday afternoon. He was a rapid worker, his thoughts had the speed and the vividness of lightning. . . . . He went to the pulpit with the assurance that he would be able to clothe his ideas appropriately at the moment and many of his illustrations came to him during the delivery of the sermon.[2]

Compare Beecher, feeling the fruit of his orchard for the ripest apple, and Spurgeon, getting food for his sheep.

[1] *Christian World*, February 4, 1892.

[2] W. Y. Fullerton, *C. H. Spurgeon*, 1920, p. 217.

## SONGS IN THE NIGHT

But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?—Job 35:10.

Elihu was a wise man, exceeding wise, though not as wise as the all-wise Jehovah, who sees light in the clouds, and finds order in confusion; hence Elihu, being much puzzled at beholding Job thus afflicted, cast about him to find the cause of it, and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be the right one in Job's case. He said within himself—"Surely, if men be tried and troubled exceedingly, it is because, while they think about their troubles, and distress themselves about their fears, they do not say, 'Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?'" Elihu's reason was very right in the majority of cases. The great cause of the Christian's distress, the reason of the depths of sorrow into which many believers are plunged, is simply this—that while they are looking about, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills whence all real help cometh; they do not say, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" We shall, however, leave that inquiry, and dwell upon those sweet words, "God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

The world hath its night. It seemeth necessary that it should have one. The sun shineth by day, and men go forth to their labors; but they grow weary, and night-fall cometh on, like a sweet boon from heaven. The darkness draweth the curtains, and shutteth out the light, which might prevent our eyes from slumber; while the sweet, calm stillness of the night permits us to rest upon the lap of ease, and there forget awhile our cares, until the morning sun appeareth, and an angel puts his hand upon the curtain, and undraws it once again, touches our eyelids, and bids us rise, and proceed to the labors of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings

men enjoy; we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness"; there is "the terror by night"; there is the dread of robbers and of fell disease, with all those fears that the timorous know, when they have no light wherewith they can discern objects. It is then they fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth; though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true, that

> Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
> Unseen, both when we sleep and when we wake,

and that at all times they are round about us—not more by night than by day. Night is the season of terror and alarm to most men. Yet even night hath its songs. Have you never stood by the seaside at night, and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God's glories? Or have you never risen from your couch, and thrown up the window of your chamber, and listened there? Listened to what? Silence—save now and then a murmuring sound, which seems sweet music then. And have you not fancied that you heard the harp of God playing in heaven? Did you not conceive, that yon stars, that those eyes of God, looking down on you, were also mouths of song—that every star was singing God's glory, singing, as it shone, its mighty Maker, and his lawful, well-deserved praise? Night hath its songs. We need not much poetry in our spirit, to catch the song of night, and hear the spheres as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they be silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God, who bears up the unpillared arch of heaven, and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him; he is a little world; he resembles the world in almost everything; and if the world hath its night, so hath man. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow,

nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of anxiety, nights of oppression, nights of ignorance, nights of all kinds, which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls. But, blessed be God, the Christian man can say, "My God giveth me songs in the night."

It is not necessary, I take it, to prove to you that Christian men have nights; for if you are Christians, you will find that *you* have them, and you will not want any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject; and I will speak this evening upon songs in the night, *their source*—God giveth them; songs in the night, *their matter*—what do we sing about in the night? songs in the night, *their excellence*—they are hearty songs, and they are sweet ones; songs in the night, *their uses*—their benefits to ourselves and others.

## I

First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? "God," says the text, our "Maker:" *he* "giveth songs in the night."

Any fool can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it; when wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Aeolian harp to whisper music when winds blow; the difficulty is for music to come when no wind bloweth. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skillful singer is he who can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart, and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit, whence notes of gratitude pour out in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night himself; he may attempt it, but he will feel how difficult it is. Let all things go as I please—I will weave songs, weave them wherever I

go, with the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no flowers are, and wherewith shall I weave a chorus of praise to God? How shall I make a crown for him? Let this voice be free, and this body be full of health, and I can sing God's praise; but stop this tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and it is not so easy to sing from the bed, and chant high praises in the fires. Give me the bliss of spiritual liberty, and let me mount up to my God, get near the throne, and I will sing, ay, sing as sweet as seraphs; but confine me, fetter my spirit, clip my wings, make me exceeding sad, so that I become old like the eagle—ah! then it is hard to sing. It is not in man's power to sing, when all is adverse. It is not natural to sing in trouble—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name": for that is a daylight song. But it was a divine song which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said—"Though the fig-tree shall not blossom," and so on, "yet will I trust in the Lord, and stay myself in the God of Jacob." Methinks in the Red Sea any man could have made a song like that of Moses—"The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea"; the difficulty would have been to compose a song before the Red Sea had been divided, and sing it before Pharaoh's hosts had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on Israel's hosts. Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of man.

But what does the text mean, when it asserts that God giveth songs in the night? We think we find two answers to the question. The first is, that usually in the night of a Christian's experience *God is his only song*. If it be daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my graces—songs touching my sweet experience—songs touching my duties—songs touching my labors; but let the night come—my graces

appear to have withered; my evidences, though they are there, are hidden; I cannot

read my title clear
To mansions in the skies;

and now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange, that when God gives his children mercies, they generally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them; but when the night comes, and he sweeps all the mercies away, then at once they say, "Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but thee; I must come to thee; and to thee only. I had cisterns once; they were full of water; I drank from them then; but now the created streams are dry; sweet Lord, I quaff no stream but thine own self, I drink from no fount but from thee." Ay, child of God, thou knowest what I say; or if thou dost not understand it yet, thou wilt do so by-and-by. It is in the night we sing of God, and of God alone. Every string is tuned, and every power hath its attribute to sing, while we praise God, and nothing else. We can sacrifice to ourselves in daylight—we only sacrifice to God by night; we can sing high praises to our dear selves when all is joyful, but we cannot sing praise to any save our God, when circumstances are untoward, and providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.

And yet again: not only does God give the song in the night, because he is the only subject upon which we can sing then, but because *he is the only one who inspires songs in the night.* Bring me up a poor, melancholy, distressed child of God: I come into the pulpit, I seek to tell him sweet promises, and whisper to him sweet words of comfort; he listeneth not to me; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines, and all the holy Barnabases that

ever preached, and they will do very little—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may. He is drinking the gall of wormwood; he says, "O Lord, thou hast made me drunk with weeping, I have eaten ashes like bread"; and comfort him as you may, it will be only a woeful note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will get no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no sonnets. But let God come to his child in the night, let him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and how you see his eyes flash fire in the night! Do you not hear him say,

> 'Tis paradise, if thou art here;
> If thou depart, 'tis hell.

*I* could not have cheered him: it is God that has done it; and God "giveth songs in the night." It is marvelous, brethren, how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold-beater, and he can hammer that promise out for whole weeks. I can say to myself, I have lived on one promise for weeks, and want no other. I want just simply to hammer that promise out into gold-leaf, and plate my whole existence with joy from it. The Christian gets his songs from God: God gives him inspiration, and teaches him how to sing: "God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

So, then, poor Christian, thou needest not go pumping up thy poor heart to make it glad. Go to thy Maker, and ask him to give thee a song in the night. Thou art a poor dry well: thou hast heard it said, that when a pump is dry you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get some up; and so, Christian, when thou art dry, go to God, ask him to pour some joy down thee, and then thou wilt get some joy up from thine own heart. Do not go to this comforter or that, for you will find them Job's comforters, after all; but go thou first and foremost to thy Maker, for he is

the great composer of songs and teacher of music; he it is who can teach thee how to sing: "God, my Maker, who giveth me songs in the night."

## II

Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now the second. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing by night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about the yesterday that is over, or else about the night itself, or else about the morrow that is to come. Each of these are sweet themes, when God our Maker gives us songs in the night. In the midst of the night the most usual method for Christians is to sing about *the day that is over*. "Well," they say, "it is night now, but I can remember when it was daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present; but I can remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidence just now; but there was a time when I could say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I have my doubts and fears at this present moment; but it is not long since I could say, with full assurance, 'I know that he shed his blood for me; I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand a second time upon the earth, though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God.' It may be darkness now; but I know the promises *were* sweet; I know I had blessed seasons in his house. I am quite sure of this; I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord; and though now my paths are strewn with thorns, I know it is the King's highway. It was a way of pleasantness once; it will be a way of pleasantness again. 'I will remember the days of old; I will meditate upon the years of the right hand of the Most High.'" Christian, perhaps the best song thou canst sing, to cheer thee in the night, is the song of yester-morn. Remember, it was not always night with thee: night is a new thing to thee. Once thou hadst a

glad heart, a buoyant spirit; once thine eye was full of fire; once thy foot was light; once thou couldst sing for very joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God, who made thee sing yesterday, has not left thee in the night. He is not a daylight God, who cannot know his children in darkness; but he loves thee now as much as ever: though he has left thee a little, it is to prove thee, to make thee trust him better, and serve him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things of which a Christian may make a song when he is in the night.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in past times. My beloved brethren, you will find it a sweet subject for song at times, to begin to sing of electing love and covenanted mercies. When thou thyself art low, it is well to sing of the fountain-head of mercy; of that blessed decree wherein thou wast ordained to eternal life, and of that glorious Man who undertook thy redemption; of that solemn covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well; of that everlasting love which, ere the hoary mountains were begotten, or ere the aged hills were children, chose thee, loved thee firmly, loved thee fast, loved thee well, loved thee eternally. I tell thee, believer, if thou canst go back to the years of eternity; if thou canst in thy mind run back to that period, or ere the everlasting hills were fashioned, or the fountains of the great deep scooped out, and if thou canst see thy God inscribing thy name in his eternal book; if thou canst see in his loving heart eternal thoughts of love to thee, thou wilt find this a charming means of giving thee songs in the night. No songs like those which come from electing love; no sonnets like those that are dictated by meditations on discriminating mercy. Some, indeed, cannot sing of election: the Lord open their mouths a little wider! Some there are that are afraid of the very term; but we only despise men who are afraid of what they believe, afraid of what God has taught

them in his Bible. No, in our darker hours it is our joy to sing:

> Sons we are through God's election,
> Who in Jesus Christ believe;
> By eternal destination,
> Sovereign grace we now receive.
> Lord, thy favor,
> Shall both grace and glory give.

Think, Christian, of the yesterday, I say, and thou wilt get a song in the night.

But if thou hast not a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies thou mayest sing of; and they are the mercies thou hast experienced. What! man, canst thou not sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met thee; when, a blind slave, thou wast sporting with death, and he saw thee, and said: "Come, poor slave, come with me!" Canst thou not sing of that rapturous moment when he snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the earth, and said: "I am the Breaker; I came to break thy chains, and set thee free!" What though thou art ever so gloomy now, canst thou forget that happy morning, when in the house of God thy voice was loud, almost as a seraph's voice, in praise? For thou couldst sing: "I am forgiven; I am forgiven":

> A monument of grace,
> A sinner saved by blood.

Go back, man; sing of that moment, and then thou wilt have a song in the night. Or if thou hast almost forgotten that, then sure thou hast some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite grown over with moss, on which thou canst read some happy inscription of his mercy toward thee! What! didst thou never have a sickness like that which thou art suffering now, and did he not raise thee up from that? Wast thou never poor before, and did he not supply thy wants? Wast thou never in straits before, and did he not

deliver thee? Come, man! I beseech thee, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and weave them into an ark, wherein thine infant faith may float safely on the stream. I bid thee not forget what God hath done. What! hast thou buried thine own diary? I beseech thee, man, turn over the book of thy remembrance. Canst thou not see some sweet hill Mizar? Canst thou not think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with thee at Hermon? Hast thou never been on the Delectable Mountains? Hast thou never been fetched from the den of lions? Hast thou never escaped the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear? Nay, O man, I know thou hast; go back, then, a little way, and take the mercies of yesterday; and though it is dark now, light up the lamps of yesterday, and they shall glitter through the darkness, and thou shalt find that God hath given thee a song in the night.

"Ay," says one, "but you know, that when we are in the dark, we cannot see the mercies God has given us. It is all very well for you to tell us this; but we cannot get hold of them." I remember an old experimental Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith; he was a sailor; we were then on board ship, and there were sundry huge posts on the shore, to which the ships were usually fastened, by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, "I know they are good strong promises, but I cannot get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them; that is the difficulty."

Now, it often happens that God's past mercies and loving kindnesses would be good sure posts to hold on to, but we have not got faith enough to throw our cable round them, and so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we cannot stay ourselves by our former mercies. I will, however, give you something that I think you can throw your cable over. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, he has been kind to others.

Come, now; if thou art in ever so great straits, sure there were others in greater straits. What! art thou lower down than poor Jonah was, when he went down to the bottoms of the mountains? Art thou more poorly off than thy Master, when he had not a place where to lay his head? What! conceivest thou thyself to be the worst of the worst? Look at Job there, scraping himself with a potsherd, and sitting on a dunghill. Art thou as bad as he? And yet Job rose up, and was richer than before; and out of the depths Jonah came, and preached the Word; and our Saviour Jesus hath mounted to his throne. O Christian! only think of what he has done for others! If thou canst not recollect that he has done anything for thee, yet remember, I beseech thee, what his usual rule is, and do not judge hardly by my God. You remember Benhadad, when he was overcome and conquered, and Ahab was after him. Some said to him, "We know that the kings of Israel are merciful kings; let us send therefore unto Ahab, and it may be he will spare our lives." Benhadad sent to the king; he had received no kindness from Ahab before, he had only heard that he was a merciful king; so to the king he went; and what said the king? "Is my brother, Benhadad, yet alive?" Truly, poor soul, if thou hast never had a merciful God, yet others have had; the King is a merciful King; go and try him. If thou art ever so low in thy troubles, look to "the hills, from whence cometh thy help." Others have had help therefrom, and so mayest thou. Up might start hundreds of God's children, and show us their hands full of comforts and mercies; and they could say, "the Lord gave us these without money and without price; and why should he not give to thee also, seeing that thou also art a king's son?" Thus, Christian, thou wilt get a song in the night out of other people, if thou canst not get a song from thyself. Never be ashamed of taking a leaf out of another man's experience book. If thou canst find no good leaf in thine own, tear one out of some

one's else; and if thou hast no cause to be grateful to God in darkness, or canst not find cause in thine own experience, go to some one else, and, if thou canst, harp his praise in the dark, and like the nightingale sing his praise sweetly when all the world has gone to rest. We can sing in the night of the mercies of yesterday.

But I think, beloved, there is never so dark a night, but there is something to sing about, even *concerning that night;* for there is one thing I am sure we can sing about, let the night be ever so dark, and that is, "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." If we cannot sing very loud, yet we can sing a little low tune, something like this—"He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "O!" says one, "I do not know where to get my dinner for to-morrow. I am a poor wretch." So you may be, my dear friend; but you are not so poor as you deserve to be. Do not be mightily offended about that; if you are, you are no child of God; for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God's mercies, but that they come through the channel of grace alone. As long as I am out of hell, I have no right to grumble; and if I were in hell I should have no right to complain, for I feel, when convinced of sin, that never creature deserved to go there more than I do. We have no cause to murmur; we can lift up our hands, and say, "Night! thou art dark, but thou mightest have been darker. I am poor, but if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick—well, I have some friend left; my lot cannot be so bad, but it might have been worse." And therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about—"Lord, I thank thee, it is not all darkness!" Besides, Christian, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is scarce ever a night that we have but there are just one or two little lamps burning up there. However dark it may be, I think you may

find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left, and some little promise to cheer thy spirit. The stars are not put out, are they? Nay, if thou canst not see them, they are there; but methinks one or two must be shining on thee; therefore give God a song in the night. If thou hast only one star, bless God for that one, perhaps he will make it two; and if thou hast only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps he will make them four. Try, then, if thou canst not find a song in the night.

But, beloved, there is another thing of which we can sing yet more sweetly; and that is, we can sing of *the day that is to come*. I am preaching to-night for the poor weavers of Spitalfields. Perhaps there are not to be found a class of men in London who are suffering a darker night than they are; for while many classes have been befriended and defended, there are few who speak up for them, and (if I am rightly informed) they are generally ground down within an inch of their lives. I suppose their masters intend that their bread shall be very sweet, on the principle that the nearer the ground, the sweeter the grass; for I should think no people have their grass so near the ground as the weavers of Spitalfields. In an inquiry by the House of Commons last week, it was given in evidence, that their average wages amounted to seven or eight shillings a week; and then they have to furnish themselves with a room, and work at expensive articles, which my friends the ladies are wearing now, and which they buy as cheaply as possible; but perhaps they do not know that they are made with the blood and bones and marrow of the Spitalfields weavers, who, many of them, work for less than man ought to have to subsist upon. Some of them waited upon me the other day; I was exceedingly pleased with one of them. He said, "Well, sir, it is very hard, but I hope there is better times coming for us." "Well, my friend," I said, "I am afraid you cannot hope for much better times, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes a second

time." "That is just what we hope for," said he. "We do not see there is any chance of deliverance, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes to establish his kingdom upon earth; and then he will judge the oppressed, and break the oppressors in pieces with an iron rod, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." I was glad my friend had got a song in the night, and was singing about the morning that was coming. Often do I cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success; "the kingdoms of this world" are not "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ"; we send out missionaries; they are for the most part unsuccessful. We are laboring, but we do not see the fruit of our labors. Well, what then? Try a little while; we shall not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for nought. A day is coming, and now is, when every minister of Christ shall speak with unction, when all the servants of God shall preach with power, and when colossal systems of heathenism shall tumble from their pedestals, and mighty, gigantic delusions shall be scattered to the winds. The shout shall be heard, "Alleluia! Alleluia! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." For that day do I look; it is to the bright horizon of that second coming that I turn my eyes. My anxious expectation is, that the sweet Sun of righteousness will arise with healing beneath his wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despotisms shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting, and that the glorious liberty of the gospel of God shall be extended throughout the known world. Christian! if thou art in a night, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for "Lo! he comes, with clouds descending." Be patient! The husbandman waits until he reaps his harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his works shall be."

One thought more upon that point. There is another sweet to-morrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, beloved, you and I shall lie on our dying-bed, and we shall want a song in the night then; and I do not know where we shall get it, if we do not get it from the to-morrow. Kneeling by the bed of an apparently dying saint, last night, I said, "Well, sister, he has been precious to you; you can rejoice in his covenant mercies, and his past loving-kindnesses." She put out her hand, and said, "Ah! sir, do not talk about them now; I want the sinner's Saviour as much now as ever; it is not a saint's Saviour I want; it is still a sinner's Saviour that I am in need of, for I am a sinner still." I found that I could not comfort her with the past; so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jaspar, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss; and then her eye glistened; she said, "Yes, I shall be there soon; I shall meet them by-and-by"; and then she seemed so glad! Ah! believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought; for if you are ever so low now, remember that

> A few more rolling suns, at most,
> Will land thee on fair Canaan's coast.

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown directly; thy hand may be filled with cares—it shall grasp a harp soon, a harp full of music. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by-and-by. Wait a little longer. Ah! beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven, we shall then,

> With transporting joys, recount
> The labors of our feet.

Our trials will seem to us nothing at all. We shall talk to one another about them in heaven and find all the more

to converse about, according as we have suffered more here below. Let us go on, therefore; and if the night be ever so dark, remember there is not a night that shall not have a morning; and that morning is to come by-and-by. When sinners are lost in darkness, *we* shall lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is matter enough for songs in the night in the past, the present, and the future.

## III

And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS.

In the first place, when you hear a man singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is a *hearty one*. Many of you sang very prettily just now, didn't you? I wonder whether you would sing very prettily if there were a stake or two in Smithfield for all of you who dared to do it? If you sang under pain and penalty that would show your heart to be in your song. We can all sing very nicely indeed when everybody else sings. It is the easiest thing in the world to open your mouth, and let the words come out; but when the devil puts his hand over your mouth, can you sing then? Can you say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"? That is hearty singing; that is real song that springs up in the night. The nightingale singeth most sweetly because she singeth in the night. We know a poet has said, that if she sang by day, she might be thought to sing no more sweetly than the wren. It is the stillness of the night that makes her song sweet. And so doth a Christian's song become sweet and hearty, because it is in the night.

Again: the songs we sing in the night will be *lasting*. Many songs we hear our fellow-creatures singing in the streets will not do to sing by-and-by; I guess they will sing a different kind of tune soon. They can sing now-a-days any

rollicking, drinking songs; but they will not sing them when they come to die; they are not exactly the songs with which to cross Jordan's billows. It will not do to sing one of those light songs when death and you are having the last tug. It will not do to enter heaven singing one of those unchaste, unholy sonnets. No; but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to leave off his song; he may keep on singing it forever. He may put his foot in Jordan's stream, and continue his melody; he may wade through it, and keep on singing still, and land himself safe in heaven; and when he is there, there need not be a gap in his strain, but in a nobler, sweeter strain, he may still continue singing his power to save. There are a great many of you that think Christian people are a very miserable set, don't you? You say, "Let me sing my song." Ay, but, my dear friends, we like to sing a song that will last; we don't like your songs; they are all froth, like bubbles on the breaker, and they will soon die away and be lost. Give me a song that will last; give me one that will not melt. O, give me not the dreamster's gold! He hoards it up, and says, "I'm rich"; and when he waketh, his gold is gone. But give me songs in the night, for they are songs I sing forever.

Again: the songs we warble in the night are those that show we have *real faith* in God. Many men have just enough faith to trust God as far as they can see him, and they always sing as far as they can see providence go right; but true faith can sing when its possessors cannot see. It can take hold of God when they cannot discern him.

Songs in the night, too, prove that we have *true courage*. Many sing by day who are silent by night; they are afraid of thieves and robbers; but the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God's sonnets in the darkness.

He who can sing songs in the night, too, proves that he has *true love* to Christ. It is not love to Christ to praise him

while every body else praises him; to walk arm in arm with him when he has the crown on his head is no great deed, I wot; to walk with Christ in rags is something. To believe in Christ when he is shrouded in darkness, to stick hard and fast by the Saviour when all men speak ill of him and forsake him—that is true faith. He who singeth a song to Christ in the night, singeth the best song in all the world; for he singeth from the heart.

IV

I am afraid of wearying you; therefore I will not dwell on the excellences of night songs, but just, in the last place, *show you their use.*

Well, beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, *because it will cheer ourselves.* When you were boys living in the country, and had some distance to go alone at night, don't you remember how you whistled and sang to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world we ought to do in the spiritual. There is nothing like singing to keep your spirits alive. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be well-nigh overwhelmed with difficulty; and we have said, "Let us have a song." We have begun to sing; and Martin Luther says, "The devil cannot bear singing." That is about the truth; he does not like music. It was so in Saul's days: an evil spirit rested on Saul; but when David played on his harp, the evil spirit went away from him. This is usually the case: if we can begin to sing we shall remove our fears. I like to hear servants sometimes humming a tune at their work; I love to hear a plowman in the country singing as he goes along with his horses. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God; but he can sing a song—surely he can sing a Psalm; it will take no more time. Singing is the best thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs, and you will often keep your heart full of praises;

keep on singing as long as you can; you will find it a good method of driving away your fears.

Sing in the night, again, because *God loves to hear his people sing in the night.* At no time does God love his children's singing so well as when they give a serenade of praise under his window, when he has hidden his face from them, and will not appear to them at all. They are all in darkness; but they come under his window, and they begin to sing there. "Ah!" says God, "that is true faith, that can make them sing praises when I will not look at them; I know there is some faith in them, that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to take away all my tender mercies and all my compassions." Sing, Christian, for singing pleases God. In heaven, we read, the angels are employed in singing: do you be employed in the same way; for by no better means can you gratify the Almighty One of Israel, who stoops from his high throne to observe the poor creature of a day.

Sing, again, for another reason: because *it will cheer your companions.* If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great help to comfort them. John Bunyan tells us, that as Christian was going through the valley he found it a dreadful dark place, and terrible demons and goblins were all about him, and poor Christian thought he must perish for certain; but just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice; he listened to it, and he heard a man in front of him saying, "Yea when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Now, that man did not know who was near him, but he was unwittingly singing to cheer a man behind. Christian, when you are in trouble, sing; you do not know who is near you. Sing! perhaps you will get a good companion by it. Sing! perhaps there will be many a heart cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be bound up by your sonnets.

Sing! there is some poor distressed brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls, and sing to you again, and you may be the means of getting him a ransom. Sing, Christian, wherever you go; try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you go down from your chamber, never go to look on man till you have first looked on your God; and when you have looked on him, seek to come down with a face beaming with joy; carry a smile for you will cheer up many a poor way-worn pilgrim by it. And when thou fastest, Christian, when thou hast an aching heart, do not appear to men to fast; appear cheerful and happy; anoint thy head, and wash thy face; be happy for thy brother's sake; it will tend to cheer him up, and help him through the valley.

One more reason; and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, for *that is one of the best arguments in all the world in favor of your religion.* Our divines, now-a-days, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove Christianity against those who disbelieve it. I should like to have seen Paul trying that! Elymas the sorcerer withstood him: how did our friend Paul treat him? He said, "O, full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" That is about the politeness such men ought to have who deny God's truth. We start with this assumption: we will prove that the Bible is God's word, but we are not going to prove God's word. If you do not like to believe it, we will shake hands, and bid you good-by; we will not argue with you. The gospel has gained little by discussion. The greatest folly on earth has been to send a man round the country, to follow up another who has been lecturing on infidelity just to make himself notorious.

Why, let them lecture on; this is a free country; why should we follow them about? The truth will win the day. Christianity need not wish for controversy; it is strong enough for it, if it wishes it; but that is not God's way. God's direction is, "Preach, teach, dogmatize." Do not stand disputing; claim a divine mission; tell men that God says it, and there leave it. Say to them, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"; when you have done that, you have done enough. For what reason should our missionaries stand disputing with Brahmins? Why should they be wasting their time by attempting to refute first this dogma, and then another, of heathenism? Why not just go and say, "The God whom ye ignorantly worship, I declare unto you; believe me, and you will be saved; believe me not, and the Bible says you are lost." And then, having thus asserted God's word, say, "I leave it; I declare it unto you; it is a thing for you to believe, not a thing for you to reason about." Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect; a thing to prove your own talent upon, by making a syllogism on it; it is a thing that demands your faith. As a messenger of heaven, I demand that faith; if you do not choose to give it, on your own head be the doom, if there be such; if there be not, you are prepared to risk it. But I have done my duty; I have told you the truth; that is enough, and there I leave it. O, Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell thee how to prove your religion. Live it out! live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence; give the external evidence of your own life. You are sick; there is your neighbor, who laughs at religion; let him come into your house. When he was sick, he said, "O, send for the doctor"; and there he was fretting, and fuming, and whining, and making all manner of noises. When you are sick, send for him; tell him that you are resigned to the Lord's will; that you will kiss the chastening rod; that you will take the cup, and drink it, because your

Father gives it. You need not make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power; but do it because you cannot help doing it. Your neighbor will say, "There is something in that." And when you come to the borders of the grave—he was there once, and you heard how he shrieked, and how frightened he was—give him your hand, and say to him, "Ah! I have a Christ that will do to die by; I have a religion that will make me sing in the night." Let him hear how you can sing, "Victory, victory, victory!" through him that loved you. I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the gospel, but we shall not prove it half so well as you will through singing in the night. Keep a cheerful frame; keep a happy heart; keep a contented spirit; keep your eye up, and your heart aloft, and you will prove Christianity better than all the Butlers, and all the wise men that ever lived. Give them the analogy of a holy life, and then you will prove religion to them; give them the evidence of internal piety, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity. Try and sing songs in the night; for they are so rare, that if thou canst sing them, thou wilt honor thy God.

I have been preaching all this while to the children of God, and now there is a sad turn that this subject must take, just one moment or so, and then we have done. There is a night coming, in which there will be no songs of joy—a night in which no one will even attempt to lead a chorus. There is a night coming when a song shall be sung, of which misery shall be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is a night coming, when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the matter of an awful terrific *misérère*—when the orchestra shall be composed of damned men, and howling fiends, and yelling demons; and mark you, I speak what I do know, and testify the Scriptures. There is a night coming for a poor soul within this house to-night; and unless he repent, it will be a night wherein he will have to growl, and

howl, and sigh, and cry, and moan and groan forever. "Who is that?" sayest thou. Thyself, my friend, if thou art godless and Christless. "What!" sayest thou, "am I in danger of hell-fire?" In danger, my friend! Ay, more: thou art damned already. So saith the Bible. Sayest thou, "And can you leave me without telling me what I must do to be saved? Can you believe that I am in danger of perishing, and not speak to me?" I trust not; I hope I shall never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for O! how I love them. Swearer, your mouth is black with oaths now; and if you die, you must go on blaspheming throughout eternity, and be punished for it throughout eternity. But list to me, blasphemer! Dost thou repent to-night? Dost thou feel thyself to have sinned against God? Dost thou feel a desire to be saved? List thee! thou mayest be saved; thou mayest be saved as much as any one that is now here. There is another; she has sinned against God enormously, and she blushes even now, while I mention her case. Dost thou repent of thy sin? There is hope for thee. Remember him who said, "Go, and sin no more." Drunkard! but a little while ago thou wast reeling down the street, and now thou repentest. Drunkard! there is hope for thee. "Well," sayest thou, "what shall I do to be saved?" Then again let me tell thee the old way of salvation. It is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou art saved." We can get no further than that, do what we will; this is the sum and substance of the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved. So saith the Scripture. Dost thou ask, "What is it to believe?" Am I to tell thee again? I cannot tell thee, except that it is to look at Christ. Dost thou see that Saviour there? He is hanging on the cross; there are his dear hands, pierced with nails, nailed to a tree, as if they were waiting for thy tardy footsteps, because thou wouldst not come. Dost thou see his dear head there? It is hanging on his breast, as if he

would lean over and kiss thy poor soul. Dost thou see his blood, gushing from his head, his hands, his feet, his side? It is running after thee; because he well knew that thou wouldst never run after it. Sinner! to be saved, all that thou hast to do is, to look at that Man. Canst thou do it now? "No," sayest thou, "I do not believe it will save me." Ah! my poor friend, try it; and if thou dost not succeed, when thou hast tried it, I am bondsman for my Lord—here, take me, bind me, and I will suffer thy doom for thee. This I will venture to say: if thou castest thyself on Christ, and he deserteth thee, I will be willing to go halves with thee in all thy misery and woe. For he will never do it: never, never, never!

No sinner was ever
Empty sent back,
Who came seeking mercy
For Jesus' sake.

I beseech thee, therefore, try him, and thou shalt not try him in vain, but shalt find him "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Thou shalt be saved now, and saved forever.

May God give you his blessing! I cannot preach as earnestly as I could wish; but, nevertheless, may God accept these words, and send them home to some hearts this night! and may you, my dear brethren and sisters, have songs in the night!

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impressions.**—This is a typical sermon; it could not possibly be confused with an essay or oration. The note of certainty is constantly sounded. Spurgeon is sure that he knows the cure for all human ills and can give men their one and only "song in the night." The Calvinism and Second Adventism stand out clearly. The biblical assurance is fundamental. Discuss these qualities as they should appear in contemporary preaching. How far could they be used today? With what modifications?

II. **Analysis.**—The divisions are clearly indicated. Was this probably done when the sermon was prepared for publication? Compare Robertson, Brooks, Chalmers. What are the arguments for and against this method?

III. **Title.**—Note the intriguing beauty of suggestion. Is there any danger that such titles become sentimental or "mushy"? How does this title arrest attention and create interest?

IV. **Text.**—Study the use of this text in comparison with the sermons that have preceded. The original text in its entirety is abandoned after a brief discussion; then an *interrogative* sentence is abbreviated and made into a *declarative* sentence. Is such treatment of a text justifiable?

VI. **Proposition.**—Not formally stated. Would this be adequate: "But, blessed be God, the Christian man can say, 'My God giveth me songs in the night'" (p. 125, ll. 69, 70)? Or, should everything ejaculatory be cut out, and the proposition be simply, "My God giveth me songs in the night"? Or, is this better, "God

gives men songs in the night"? Or this, "God is the complete source of comfort and courage for men"? What is the value of the words, "blessed be God"? Ought a proposition to be severely logical, or may emotional and pietistic terms be used?

VIII. **Conclusion.**—Spurgeon's conclusion is a conspicuous example of the impassioned appeal for repentance and faith, based upon the certainty of retribution for sin and a vivid sense of hell. It follows inevitably from the sermon. It is the evangelistic "appeal for a verdict" in one of its most complete expressions. How far can such a conclusion be used in the modern pulpit? Compare it with Bushnell and Chalmers. Suggest the substitution of any factors that seem to you more effective.

IX. **Plan.**—This is what has been called the "Adverb Method" in sermon development. See Davis, *Preaching by Laymen*, 1923, pages 131–33, for fuller discussion. Is the climax actually reached with the completion of II? And would Spurgeon have done well if he had stopped there?

X. **Material.**—There is a large biblical factor in the sermon. Spurgeon may be called a "Bible preacher." Note the exegesis of Ps. 121:1, 2 at page 123, lines 14–18, comparing American Standard and Authorized Versions. Study with especial care the reference to the weavers of Spitalfields (p. 135, l. 418, to p. 136, l. 448). Is this an adequate treatment of the economic problem in the light of the teachings of Jesus? Could anything more have been offered to the poor man? How would a preacher today probably handle the same situation?

Does Spurgeon's treatment of the problem give warrant for the criticism that the church offers only the solace and reward of an earthly or heavenly joy for the satisfaction of the woes that arise under the modern industrial system? What would Walter Rauschenbusch have said in this case? Does this instance furnish any conclusion concerning the preaching of the social gospel?

XI. **Illustrations.**—Spurgeon was a master in the use of vivid and pertinent illustrations. One of the best manuals ever written on the subject is his book, *The Art of Illustration.* The voluminous and accurate working of his mind is seen in the swift movement of the sentences (p. 132, ll. 302–17). Here appear in rapid succession the following figures:

1. Moses in the ark of bulrushes
2. A buried and therefore forgotten diary
3. The hill Mizar (Ps. 42:6)
4. Mount Hermon and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8)
5. The Delectable Mountains, from *Pilgrim's Progress*
6. Daniel in the den of lions
7. David and his exploits with the lion and bear (I Sam. 17:36)
8. The lamplighter, a familiar scene from daily life

What does this indicate concerning the way in which Spurgeon's mind was charged with illustrative material so that he thought in figures? Is there too much of it, so that the minds of his hearers were likely to be confused? Ought more than one illustration to be used to enforce a point?

Study especially the homely illustrations from daily life, such as the singing pebbles and chanting waves

(p. 124, l. 46); the Aeolian harp (p. 125, l. 88); the gold-beater (p. 128, ll. 180–85); priming the pump (p. 128, ll. 191–96); God's everlasting love (p. 130, ll. 246–53); getting the cable around the mooring-post (p. 132, ll. 321–28); the devil putting his hand over one's mouth (p. 138, l. 532); death having his last tug (p. 139, l. 549); whistling to keep up one's courage (p. 140, l. 594). What principles concerning the use of illustrations do you derive from these instances?

XIV. **Style.**—The style in this sermon is different from that of any other thus far studied. Compare especially Bushnell and Chalmers. Note the frequent use of archaic forms, "hath," "seemeth," "shineth." Does this seem an affectation? Or does it give a certain quaintness and charm which is pleasing? Would the use of these forms be warranted in the modern pulpit? Note also the reflection of hymns in the style. For example, "sonnets" (p. 128, l. 171; p. 130, l. 261), reflecting the familiar lines

> Teach me some melodious sonnet
> Sung by flaming choirs above.

Can a sonnet be sung? Note also (p. 139, ll. 553–58) a reflection of

> Then in a nobler, sweeter song
> I'll sing his power to save.

How far is this paraphrasing of familiar hymns effective in preaching today?

XV. **General observations.**—(1) The intense Calvinism of the sermon. It is profoundly doctrinal. There is no doubt about Spurgeon's biblicism and orthodox

theology. He is completely convinced of his doctrinal positions.

2. The human sympathy in the sermon. It is close to the needs of common men and the experiences of daily life. One knows that this is a lover of mankind and a true pastor, preaching what seems to him a message which bears directly upon life.

3. It is a comforting sermon. Whatever judgment one holds concerning the adequacy of the comfort offered, no doubt can exist that the sermon leaves those who heard it with a keener sense that God actually cares and is on their side in their struggles.

4. It is a sermon that will be remembered. The points are clearly and forcefully made and the final appeal is fervid and sincere.

## SERMON STUDY VII

### NEWMAN, "CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD MADE MAN"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

John Henry Newman, English, Roman Catholic cardinal, was born in London, February 21, 1801, and died August 11, 1890. He became a clergyman in the Church of England and was early recognized as a preacher of high intellectual quality and spiritual power. In close comradeship with Keble and Richard Hurrell Froude, he soon assumed the most influential place in a tendency toward the Roman Catholic church which became known as the Oxford Movement. It carried Newman into the Roman Catholic communion, into which he was received in 1845. In defense of his integrity, Newman published in 1864 the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, one of the most interesting and subtle spiritual biographies ever written. He was created cardinal in 1879.

Cardinal Newman is ranked as one of the greatest English preachers. His *Parochial and Plain Sermons* occupy eight volumes. The one selected for study is in Volume VI, pages 53–68. It is a type of doctrinal preaching in its most dogmatic form. Many of Newman's sermons are on phases of Christian experience and are profound in insight and illuminating in exposition. The sermon studied, however, is chosen as an example of a method which is used by preachers of all schools, and which is seen in certain sections of Spurgeon's sermon.

*The Parochial and Plain Sermons* were preached at St. Mary's Church in Oxford. Dr. Cadman speaks of "his analysis of the human heart, his exquisite rhetoric, his tender or indignant fervor."

Mr. Gladstone said:

> Dr. Newman's manner in the pulpit was one which, if you considered it in its separate parts, would lead you to arrive at very unsatisfactory conclusions. There was not very much change in the inflection of the voice; action there was none; his sermons were read, and his eyes were always on his book; and all that, you will say, is against efficiency in preaching. Yes; but you take the man as a whole, and there was a stamp and a seal upon him, there was a solemn music and sweetness in his tone, there was a completeness in the figure, taken together with the tone and with the manner, which made even his delivery, such as I have described it, and though exclusively with written sermons, singularly attractive.

Besides the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, all of which are worthy of careful study, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* should be read. See also excellent essays in Cadman, *The Three Religious Leaders of Oxford*, and Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*.

## CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD MADE MAN

Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.—Heb. 9:11.

Before the Passover the Jews numbered fourteen days, and then the Feast came. It was to be the fourteenth day of the month, at even; and to mark the beginning of that period more distinctly, it was made the beginning of months, that is, the first month of the year. We then, if our Easter answers to the Passover, as substance answers to shadow, may well account that from this day, which is fourteen days before Easter, a more sacred season begins. And so our Church seems to have determined it, since from this day the character of the Services changes. Henceforth they have more immediate reference to Him, whose death and resurrection we are soon to commemorate. The first weeks in Lent are spent in repentance, though with the thought of Him withal, who alone can give grace and power to our penitential exercises; the last, without precluding repentance, are more especially consecrated to the thought of those sufferings, whereby grace and power were purchased for us.

The history of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; of Dinah, Jacob's daughter; and of Joseph in Potiphar's house; the account of our Lord's temptation; and the parable of the man out of whom the evil spirit went and returned sevenfold, which have been read on Sundays at this season, may fitly be called penitential subjects; and of the same character have been the Epistles. On the other hand, to-day's Epistle, from which the text is taken, speaks of Christ's Incarnation and Atonement; while the Gospel tells us of His Divinity, He being that same God who, as the first Morning Lesson relates, called Himself in the bush "I am that I am." And so again, next Sunday's Epistle is also upon our Lord's Divinity and voluntary humiliation, and one of the Lessons and the Gospel contain the sacred narrative of

His passion and death. The other second Lesson is also on the subject of His humiliation, from St. Paul. And further: all four first Lessons of to-day and next Sunday relate to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, which is the type of our redemption.

Let us then to-day, in accordance with the apparent disposition of our Services, remind ourselves of one or two of the great truths which the Epistle contains—of course we cannot do so with any great exactness or completeness—but still, sufficiently to serve, through God's mercy, as a sort of preparation for the solemn days which lie before us in the course of the next fortnight. It will be a fitting preparation, please God, for Good Friday, to bear in mind who our Lord is, and what He has done for us. And, at present, let us confine ourselves to this one subject, who our Lord is—God and man in one Person. On this most sacred and awful subject, I shall speak as simply and plainly as I can; merely stating what has to be stated, after the pattern of the Creeds, and leaving those who hear me, as the Creeds leave them, to receive it into their hearts fruitfully, and to improve it, under God's grace, for themselves.

Let us, I say, consider who Christ is, as the Epistle for the day sets forth in the words of the text.

1. First, Christ is God: from eternity He was the Living and True God. This is not mentioned expressly in the Epistle for this day, though it is significantly implied there in various ways; but it is all but expressly stated, and that by Himself, in the Gospel. He says there, "Before Abraham was, I am,"[1] by which words He declares that He did not begin to exist from the Virgin's womb, but had been in existence before. And by using the words *I am*, He seems to allude, as I have already said, to the Name of God, which was revealed to Moses in the burning bush, when he was commanded to say to the children of Israel, "*I am* hath

[1] John 8:58.

sent me unto you."[1] Again: St. Paul says of Christ, that He was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet "made Himself of no reputation." In like manner St. John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And St. Thomas addressed Him as his Lord and his God; and St. Paul declares that He is "God over all, blessed forever"; and the prophet Isaiah, that He is "the mighty God, the Everlasting Father"; and St. Paul again, that He is "our great God and Saviour"; and St. Jude, that He is "our only Sovereign God and Lord."[2] It is not necessary, surely, to enlarge on this point, which is constantly brought before us in Scripture and in our Services. "Day by day we magnify Him, and we worship His Name ever world without end"; which would be idolatry were He not the Very and Eternal God, our Maker and Lord. We know, indeed, that the Father is God also, and so is the Holy Ghost; but still Christ is God and Lord, most fully, completely, and entirely, in all attributes as perfect and as adorable, as if nothing had been told us of Father and of Holy Ghost; as much to be adored, as, before He came in the flesh, the Father was adored by the Jews, and is now to be adored by us "in spirit and in truth." For He tells us expressly Himself, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father"; and "all men" are to "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"; and "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."[3]

2. And here we are brought to the second point of doctrine which it is necessary to insist upon, that while our Lord is God He is also Son of God, or rather, that He is God because He is the Son of God. We are apt, at first hearing, to say

[1] Exod. 3:14.

[2] Phil. 11:6, 7; John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Isa. 9:6; Tit. 21:3; Jude, chap. 4.

[3] John 14:9; 5:23.

that He is God though He is the Son of God, marvelling at the mystery. But what to man is a mystery, to God is a cause. He is God, not *though*, but *because* He is the Son of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and that which is begotten of God is God. I do not say that we could presume thus to reason for ourselves, but Scripture draws the conclusion for us. Christ tells us Himself, "as the Father has life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." And St. Paul says that He is "the brightness of God's glory, and the express Image of His Person."[1] And thus, though we could not presume to reason of ourselves that He that is begotten of God is God, as if it became us to reason at all about such ineffable things, yet, by the light of Scripture, we may. And after all, if the truth must be said, it is surely not so marvellous and mysterious that the Son of God should be God, as that there should be a Son of God at all. It is as little level to natural reason that God should have a Son, as that, if there be a Son, He must be God because He is the Son. Both are mysteries; and if we admit with Scripture that there be an Only-begotten Son, it is even less to admit what Scripture also teaches, that that Only-begotten Son is God because He is Only-begotten. And that is what makes the doctrine of our Lord's Eternal Sonship of such supreme importance, viz., that He is God because He is begotten of God; and they who give up the latter truth, are in the way to give up, or will be found already to have given up, the former. The great safeguard to the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity is the doctrine of His Sonship; we realize that He is God only when we acknowledge Him to be by nature and from eternity Son.

Nay, our Lord's Sonship is not only the guarantee to us of His Godhead, but also the condition of His incarnation. As the Son was God, so on the other hand was the Son

[1] John 5:26; Heb. 1:3.

suitably made man; it belonged to Him to have the Father's perfections, it became Him to assume a servant's form. We must beware of supposing that the Persons of the Ever-blessed and All-holy Trinity differ from each other only in this, that the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. They differ in this besides, that the Father *is* the Father, and the Son *is* the Son. While They are one in substance, Each has distinct characteristics which the Other has not. Surely those sacred Names have a meaning in them, and must not lightly be passed over. And they will be found, if we reverently study them, to supply a very merciful use towards our understanding Scripture; for we shall see a fitness, I say, now that that sacred truth is revealed, in the *Son* of God taking flesh, and we shall thereby understand better what He says of Himself in the Gospels. The Son of God became the Son a second time, though not a second Son, by becoming man. He was a Son both before His incarnation, and by a second mystery, after it. From eternity He had been the Only-begotten in the bosom of the Father; and when He came on earth, this essential relation to the Father remained unaltered; still, He was a Son, when in the form of a servant—still performing the will of the Father, as His Father's Word and Wisdom, manifesting His Father's glory and accomplishing His Father's purposes.

For instance, take the following passages of Scripture: "I do nothing of Myself"; "He that sent Me is with Me"; "the Father hath not left Me alone," "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; "Whatsoever I speak, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak"; "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me."[1] Now, it is true, these passages may be understood of our Lord's human nature; but surely, if we confine them to this interpretation, we run the risk of viewing Christ as two separate beings, not as one Person; or, again, of gradually forgetting or explaining away the doctrine

[1] John 8:28, 29; 5:17; 12:50; 14:10.

of His Divinity altogether. If we speak as if our Lord had a human personality, then, if He has another personality as God, He is not one Person; and if He has not, He is not God. Such passages, then, as the foregoing, would seem to speak neither of Christ's human nature simply, nor of His divine, but of both together; that is, of Him who being the Son of God is also man. He who spoke was one really existing Person, and He, that one Living and Almighty Son, both God and man, was the brightness of God's glory and His Power, and wrought what His Father willed, and was in the Father and the Father in Him, not only in heaven but on earth. In heaven He was this, and did this, as God; and on earth He was this, and did this, in that manhood which He assumed, but whether in heaven, or on earth, still as the Son. It was therefore true of Him *altogether*, when He spoke, that He was not alone, nor spoke or wrought of Himself, but where He was, there was the Father, and whoso had seen Him had seen the Father, whether we think of Him as God or as man.

Again, we read in Scripture of His being sent by the Father, addressing the Father, interceding to Him for His disciples, and declaring to them that His Father is greater than He; in what sense says and does He all this? Some will be apt to say that He speaks only in His human nature; words which are perplexing to the mind that tries really to contemplate Him as Scripture describes Him, as if He were speaking only under a representation, and not in His Person. No; it is truer to say that He, that One All-gracious Son of God, who had been with the Father from the beginning, equal in all divine perfections and one in substance, but subordinate as being the Son—as He had ever been His Word, and Wisdom, and Counsel, and Will, and Power in Heaven—so after His incarnation, and upon the earth, still spoke and acted after, yet with, the Father as before, though in a new nature, which He had put on, and in humiliation.

This, then, is the second point of doctrine which I had to mention, that our Lord was not only God, but the Son of God. We know more than that God took on Him our flesh; though all is mysterious, we have a point of knowledge further and more distinct, viz., that it was neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son of the Father, God the Son, God from God, and Light from Light, who came down upon earth, and who thus, though graciously taking on Him a new nature, remained in Person as He had been from everlasting, the *Son* of the Father, and spoke and acted towards the Father as a Son.

3. Now, thirdly, let us proceed to consider His mercy in taking on Him our nature, and what that act of mercy implies. The text speaks of "a greater and more perfect tabernacle," that is, greater than anything earthly. This means His pure and sinless flesh, which was miraculously formed of the substance of the Blessed Virgin, and therefore called "not of this building," or more literally, "not of this creation," for it was a new creation by which He was formed, even by the descent of the Holy Ghost. This was the new and perfect tabernacle into which He entered; entered, but not to be confined, not to be circumscribed by it. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; though His own hands "made it and fashioned it," still He did not cease to be what He was, because He became man, but was still the Infinite God, manifested in, not altered by the flesh. He took upon Him our nature, as an instrument of His purposes, not as an agent in the work. What is one thing cannot become another; His manhood remained human, and His Godhead remained divine. God became man, yet was still God, having His manhood as an adjunct, perfect in its kind, but dependent upon His Godhead. So much so, that unless Scripture had expressly called Him man, we might well have scrupled to do so. Left to ourselves, we might have felt it more reverential to have spoken of Him, as *incarnate* indeed,

come in human flesh, human and the like, but not simply as man. But St. Paul speaks in plain terms of our one Mediator as "the man Christ Jesus," not to speak of our Lord's own words on the subject. Still, we must ever remember, that though He was in nature perfect man, He was not man in exactly the same sense in which any one of us is a man. Though man, He was not, strictly speaking, in the English sense of the word, *a* man; He was not such as one of us, and one out of a number. He was man because He had our human nature wholly and perfectly, but His Person is not human like ours, but divine. He who was from eternity, continued one and the same, but with an addition. His incarnation was a "taking of the manhood into God." As He had no earthly father, so He has no human personality. We may not speak of Him as we speak of any individual man, acting from and governed by a human intelligence within Him, but He was God, acting not only as God, but now through the flesh also, when He would. He was not a man made God, but God made man.

(1) Thus, when He prayed to His Father, it was not the prayer of a man supplicating God, but of the Eternal Son of God who had ever shared the glory of the Father, addressing Him, as before, but under far other circumstances, and in a new way, not according to those most intimate and ineffable relations which belonged to Him who was in the bosom of the Father, but in the economy of redemption, and in a lower world, viz., through the feelings and thoughts of human nature. When He wept at the grave of Lazarus, or sighed at the Jews' hardness of heart, or looked round about in anger, or had compassion on the multitudes, He manifested the tender mercy, the compassion, the long-suffering, the fearful wrath of Almighty God, yet not in Himself, as from eternity, but as if indirectly through the outlets of that manhood with which He had clothed Himself.

(2) When "He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,"[1] He exerted the virtue of His Divine Essence through the properties and circumstances of the flesh. When He breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost,"[2] He vouchsafed to give His Holy Spirit through the breath of His human nature. When virtue went out of Him, so that whoso touched Him was made whole, here too, in like manner, He shows us that He was not an individual man, like any of us, but God acting through human nature as His assumed instrument.

(3) When He poured out His precious blood upon the Cross, it was not a man's blood, though it belonged to His manhood, but blood full of power and virtue, instinct with life and grace, as issuing most mysteriously from Him who was the Creator of the world. And the case is the same in every successive communication of Himself to individual Christians. As He became the Atoning Sacrifice by means of His human nature, so is He our High Priest in heaven by means of the same. He is now in heaven, entered into the Holy place, interceding for us, and dispensing blessings to us, He gives us abundantly of His Spirit; but still He gives It not at once from His Divine nature, though from eternity the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, but by means of that incorruptible flesh which He has taken on Him. For Christ is come a High Priest through the perfect tabernacle which He assumed, a tabernacle not of this creation, or in the ordinary course of nature, but framed miraculously of the substance of the Virgin by the Holy Ghost; and therefore the streams of life flow to us from Him, as God indeed, but still as God incarnate. "That which quickeneth us is the Spirit of the Second Adam, and His flesh is that wherewith He quickeneth."

[1] John 9:6. [2] John 20:22.

(4) I shall mention a fourth and last point in this great mystery. I have said that our High Priest and Saviour, the Son of God, when He took our nature upon Him, acted through it, without ceasing to be what He was before, making it but the instrument of His gracious purposes. But it must not be supposed, because it was an instrument, or because in the text it is called a tabernacle, that therefore it was not intimately one with Him, or that it was merely like what is commonly meant by a tabernacle, which a man dwells in, and may come in and out of; or like an instrument which a man takes up and lays down. Far from it; though His Divine Nature was sovereign and supreme when He became incarnate, yet the manhood which He assumed was not kept at a distance from Him (if I may so speak) as a mere instrument, or put on as a mere garment, or entered as a mere tabernacle, but it was really taken into the closest and most ineffable union with Him. He received it into His Divine Essence (if we may dare so to speak) almost as a new attribute of His Person; of course I speak by way of analogy, but I mean as simply and indissolubly. Let us consider what is meant by God's justice, or mercy, or wisdom, and we shall perhaps have some glimpse of the meaning of the inspired writers, when they speak of the Son's incarnation. If we said that the Son of God is just or merciful, we should mean that these are attributes which attach to all He is or was. Whatever He says, whatever He designs, whatever He works, He is just and loving when He thus says, designs, or works. There never was a moment, there never was an act of providence, in which God wrought, without His being just and loving, even though both attributes may not be exercised at once in the same act. In somewhat the same way the Son of God is man; all that is necessary to constitute a perfect manhood is attached to His eternal Person absolutely and entirely, belonging to Him as really and fully as His justice, truth, or power; so that it would be as unmeaning

to speak of dividing one of His attributes from Him as to separate from Him His manhood.

This throws light upon the Catholic tenet, that the Godhead and Manhood were "joined together in One Person, never to be divided"; words which also serve too often to bring home to us how faintly we master the true doctrine: for we are sometimes tempted to ask, where is it said in Scripture that the manhood shall never be divided from the Godhead? Which is as incongruous a question as if we were to ask whether God's justice, mercy, or holiness can be divided from Him; or whether Scripture ever declares that this or that attribute may not disappear: for as these have no real existence except as *in* God, neither has our Lord's manhood except as in His Divine nature; it never subsisted except as belonging to His divinity; it has no substance in itself.

Thus all that He did and said on earth was but the immediate deed and word of God the Son acting by means of His human tabernacle. He surrounded Himself with it; He lodged it within Him; and thenceforth the Eternal Word, the Son of God, the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity, had two natures, the one His own as really as the other, Divine and human; and He acted through both of them, sometimes through both at once, sometimes through one and not through the other, as Almighty God acts sometimes by the attribute of justice, sometimes by that of love, sometimes through both together. He was as entirely man as if He had ceased to be God, as fully God as if He had never become man, as fully both at once as He was in being at all.

The Athanasian Creed expresses all this as follows: "The right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God is God and Man; God of the substance of His Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh sub-

sisting: who, although He be God and Man, yet is not two but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh," as if He could cease to be God, "but by taking of the Manhood into God," taking it into His Divine Person as His own; "one altogether, not by confusion of substance," not by the Divine Nature and the human becoming some one new nature, as if He ceased to be God, and did not become a man, "but by unity of *Person*." This is what His unity consists in—not unity of nature, but in this, that He who came on earth, was the very Same who had been from everlasting.

In conclusion, let me observe, that we ought not to speak, we ought not to hear, such high truths, without great reverence and awe, and preparation of mind. And this is a reason, perhaps, why this is a proper season for dwelling on them; when we have been engaged, not in mirth and festivity, but in chastening and sobering ourselves. The Psalmist says, "Lord, I am not high minded; I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother." When we are engaged in weaning ourselves from this world, when we are denying ourselves even lawful things, when we have a subdued tone of thought and feeling, then is an allowable time surely to speak of the high mysteries of the faith. And then, too, are they especially a comfort to us; but those who neglect fasting, make light of orthodoxy too. But to those who through God's grace are otherwise minded, the Creed of the Church brings relief; when, amid the gloom of their own hearts, Christ rises like the Sun of righteousness, giving them peace for disquiet, "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified."

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—The purpose of this sermon is to present the doctrine of the deity of Christ as it is expressed in the Athanasian Creed, bulwarking every statement by proof-texts from the Bible. The method is different from that used by any preacher that we have studied: affirmation rather than discussion. Therefore this sermon should be carefully studied in order to discover the strength and weakness of dogmatic preaching.

II. **Analysis.**—Note the proportion in this order: Introduction, 2; I, 2; II, 4; III, 7; Conclusion, 1; a total of 16.

Excepting the unusual length of the Introduction, this is excellent proportion, allowing the points additional time as they grow in importance.

V. **Subject.**—Announced definitely (p. 155, ll. 46–47) "Who our Lord is—God and man in one Person." He then describes this subject as "most sacred and awful," stating that he will speak on it "as plainly and simply" as he can. Does a sermon gain anything from such an announcement of the subject and method of treatment?

VI. **Proposition.**—There is no formal statement of the proposition. It is clearly implied in the title, where the copula *is* may be supplied in place of the comma, making the title read, "Christ is the Son of God made man," which is the precise proposition of the sermon. Another way in which the proposition is handled is by distributing it in the three divisions of the sermon: "Christ is God; Christ is incarnate Son of God; this is the supreme revelation of God's mercy." Is this an effective method of handling a proposition?

VII. **Introduction.**—This is the longest and most formal introduction studied. Note that the force of it is determined by the liturgical character of the church and the interest of the people in the observance of Lent and the lectionary of the Christian year. What does this suggest concerning the adaptation of an introduction to the popular mood? Study the first two sentences carefully. To what does the second *it* in the second sentence refer, to *feast* or to *month?* Could the sentences be condensed as follows: "The Jews made the Passover month the first month of the Year and placed the Feast on the fourteenth day." What would be lost and gained by such a revision? Note the use of formal phrases, "through God's mercy" (p. 155, l. 41); "Please God" (p. 155, l. 44); "under God's grace" (p. 155, l. 52). Is there danger that these will become mere empty ejaculations? Suggest cautions governing their use. Note the exaltation of the creeds of the church and the indication of their finality (p. 155, ll. 47–52). Study the "take it or leave it" suggestion. Compare Spurgeon in this respect. What would be the influence of such a statement upon a congregation that does not place creeds in the first rank of importance? Is the preacher's appeal finally to the authority of the creeds, the Bible, or the truth that he brings forth in his sermon? Note the strength of the dogmatic position in the assurance it gives to the preacher and the congregation. Is there also a weakness to be noted? Note the ways in which this Introduction meets (*a*) the occasion of the sermon, (*b*) the temper of the congregation, (*c*) the spirit of the preacher, (*d*) the development of the thought.

VIII. **Conclusion.**—It is marked off clearly from the body of the sermon. Study it critically in comparison with Spurgeon. Each is urgent and hortatory; each makes a direct appeal to the will of the hearers. The courses of action are different, however, as are the grounds on which they are urged. Note Newman's repeated emphasis on the "high mysteries" of the faith. How valid is such an appeal today? Note also the stress upon unquestioning acceptance of the Athanasian Creed and the insight that comes through fasting and self-denial. Would these be cogent reasons in the case of the congregation to which Newman was preaching? What would have been the value of such an appeal in the case of Spurgeon's congregation? What principle do you derive concerning the relation between the congregation and the conclusion of the sermon?

X. **Material.**—This sermon is a conspicuous example of the use of biblical and doctrinal (creedal) materials in a sermon. On the basis of Scripture texts and creedal statements, the sermon consists of a series of affirmations. What is presupposed concerning the mental and religious attitude of the congregation? What is required on the part of a preacher in order to enable him to use these materials effectively? When is such preaching desirable? If not all the time, under what conditions?

Study the way in which Newman handles biblical material. Note the comparison between John 8:58 and Exod. 3:4 (p. 155, ll. 59–65). Do you consider this accurate? Newman makes Isa. 9:6 refer to Christ. Is this correct? Note the quotation from the *Te deum laudamus* (p. 156, ll. 78–81). Study the following statements concerning the authority of Scripture: "I do

not say that we could presume thus to reason for ourselves, but Scripture draws the conclusion for us" (p. 157, ll. 102–4); "And thus, though we could not presume to reason at all about such ineffable things, yet, by the light of Scripture, we may" (p. 157, ll. 107–11). How far is this position justifiable? With what kind of a congregation would it carry conviction? Newman regards Paul as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (p. 157, ll. 106, 107). Is this correct? Is the citation of Jesus' words to Nicodemus (p. 157, ll. 100–2) a cogent argument for the deity of Christ? From a study of these and other instances state the principles that should govern the preacher's use of the Bible in sermons.

XIV. **Style.**—Note the capitalization. What is the reason for its use? Newman is regarded as an outstanding master of clear and beautiful English. How is this judgment confirmed by this sermon? Note the slight use of illustration. How do you account for it? Is there a distinct literary style fitted to doctrinal preaching?

## SERMON STUDY VIII

### AINSWORTH, "STAR COUNTING AND HEART HEALING"

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Percy Clough Ainsworth, English, Wesleyan, son of a Wesleyan minister, was born in 1873 and died in 1909. He was one of a family singularly united and happy, and inherited the traditions of a manse. He turned naturally toward the ministry and was thoroughly prepared for his work. He was a somewhat retiring and exceedingly sensitive young man, although those who knew him intimately appreciated his keen sense of humor and his real strength of personality. He was a lover of outdoor life, an excellent athlete, something of a naturalist, and a writer of poetry of no mean worth. His sense of beauty was highly developed and the artist appears in his sermons. After a period of service in small parishes he was appointed to Wesley Chapel, Birmingham, where he came quickly to a position of recognized leadership. His home was well-nigh perfect and the primary source of inspiration in his preaching. He wrote constantly in a devotional vein, publishing his work in the *Methodist Times*. When he was only thirty-six years old an attack of typhoid fever ended his useful and gracious life.

The sermon which we study is taken from *The Pilgrim Church* (New York: Revell), and is printed here by permission. It is chosen for study because of its intrinsic beauty and for its representative character.

It belongs in the group of brief sermons which have been called into being by the demands of the modern church service. Addresses at vesper worship, sermons before students, and the regular ministry of preaching in thousands of churches demand the brief, clear, urgent presentation of a single thought, not according to the older and classical models, but rather a sermon form that has come into existence to meet the need of a time that has been trained to the swift movement and the progress of the moving-picture film. This sermon is not normative of this type; but it has such intrinsic worth and such suggestion in respect to form that we present it as worthy of careful study at the close of the series.

## STAR COUNTING AND HEART HEALING

He healeth the broken in heart; . . . . He telleth the number of the stars.—Ps. 147:3, 4.

It is not easy for us to get these two thoughts into our minds at the same time. Still harder is it for us to think them as one thought. It seems such a far cry from all the stars of heaven to one poor bleeding heart—from those myriad points of fire to a few human tears. We see the sweep of the stars, and we walk in the shadow of pain; but in the bitter things we suffer, how little use we make of the great things we see! The stars set us dreaming and yearning. They carry us out beyond the landmarks of history and the chart of experience. And then just one sharp plea wrung from life in its sore need—and there are no stars. In a moment we are shut up to the short view of life. So easily we get lost in the littleness and the bitterness of things. When the heartbreak comes the starlight goes. Yes, sometimes just a little dust of the road can put the stars out for us. But how comes all this about? Why do starlight and trouble so often stand unrelated thoughts in our minds, unrelated facts in our lives? One answer is found in the make of our minds. With us one idea often excludes another that really belongs to it. We have not a large enough mental grasp. We look up at the stars and we forget our little world; we look out upon our little world and we forget the stars. We lose the years in the thought of the hour, and the hour in the thought of the ages. We seem unable to hold on to a great thought when we are in one of life's narrow places; yet it is just in that narrow place that the great thought can do most for us. We live by hours, and so we count by hours. We are pilgrims, so our standard of measurement is a step. In our fragmentary thinking we draw dividing lines across the undivided, and fail to see that the limited and the illimitable are not two things but one. We stumble over the

very axioms of life. We say it is obvious that the part belongs to the whole; but we often act as if the whole were one thing and the part were another and entirely different thing, and as if there were no discoverable relation between the two. So when this great word about the God who numbers the stars is given to us we say, "Let me get away from my little world and think it out." And we do think it out—out of our reach, out of our experience, out of our lives. When shall we learn that we cannot get the best out of a thought simply by thinking it? To get the real help of a great thought you must trust it, you must live it. Nowadays many people are so busy thinking things out that they scarcely ever think anything in. And it is the truth you think into your life that really counts. And to do that, thought must clasp hands with faith and love and toil. From a purely speculative and intellectual point of view I defy any man to preach a gospel of comfort from the text, "He telleth the number of the stars." Many a man has felt his helplessness and his loneliness beneath the stars. He has said, God is immeasurably remote from my little life down here among the shadows. Is it likely that amid the vast and intricate calculations of the universe He will take account of an insignificant fraction like my life? How should He think upon me when He has all the stars to count? How should He miss me from the fold when He is shepherding all the heavenly hosts? Thus for some the greatness of God has been made to spell the loneliness of man. That is the shivering logic of an intellectual conception of the Deity. The psalmist who spoke of star counting and heart healing in the same breath had got beyond that. The deep, persistent needs of his life had brought him there. It was not by a mere chance that he chose to speak of heartbreak when he sought to link earth with heaven and to lift the fretful mind of man up to the thought of God's eternal presence and power. Heartbreak is not an idea, it is an experience. Yes, and it is an experience

that only the stars can explain and only divinity can account for. It is only in these words, linking stars and hearts together, that we can find a noble and satisfying interpretation of pain. Why do we suffer? We suffer not because we are akin to earth, but because we are akin to heaven. The final secret of life's pain lies in life's high and eternal relationship. We have a present kinship with the stars and with all they stand for. They stand for the things above us and beyond us, whereof the possibilities and the beginnings are within us. We cannot help wanting to reach them, for the true life of our heart comes from beyond them. It is a greater thing than we have counted it to be. Its native air is blown from beyond the stars. It is up there above the starlight that you must find the explanation of the stricken conscience of the sinner and the yearning heart of the saint. Heartbreak is not to be regarded as a rare and tragic episode in the human story. This world only knows sorrow as an incident. It is, for it, a cloud upon the sun, sometimes darkening all the after day. It is a voice of weeping or a choked silence in the shadowy dusk of the river's edge. But, my friends, the last true sorrow of life is not on this wise. It is not dealt out to one here and another there as a bitter judgment or a wholesome discipline. It is inwoven into life. To miss it is to miss life. It is the price of the best. It is the law of the highest. When after what we sometimes call the long farewell you have seen a sorrow-stricken man bearing a bleeding heart out to the verge of the world, beyond the last outpost of earthly sympathy and beyond the kindly kingdom of human help, you have seen something for which earth has no healing—but you have not learned anything approaching the whole truth concerning heartbreak. There is the broken and the contrite heart, the heart that is seeking sainthood, and fainting and failing and aching in the quest. There is the broken and the yearning heart, that strains and throbs with lofty longings and the burden of the

valley of vision. And to find healing for such sorrow a man must find God. And he must be the God who counts the stars. "He telleth the number of the stars." That is a grand, breathless thought, but it is not too grand. No thought of God narrower and lower than that can ever truly comfort us. Only the Infinite can heal the soul. God could not minister to strained hearts if the stars were too much for Him. The mystery of the stars and the mystery of human pain are parts of one great mystery that is no mystery to God, for He dwells beyond it in the light of perfect knowledge, and penetrates it wholly with the warmth of perfect love. And that is the vision that the human heart will always need. And that is the vision that is fading from some men's minds to-day. Modern theology—at any rate a certain large school of it—is in danger of belittling the greatness of God in its attempts to show His nearness. The immanence of God is a very precious and a very glorious truth, but I think some are in danger of forgetting just now that this truth owes all that is vital and efficient in it to God's transcendence. There was a time when the preacher used to give out for his text, "Behold, the nations are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." He preached the glory and the wisdom and the power of God until men saw the universe as but one ray of all that glory, one word of all that wisdom, one deed of all that power. And with that tremendous background he preached the effectual comfort of the everlasting Father. Some are getting afraid of that background. And we need to remind ourselves that the human heart needs it and demands it, and will never be truly satisfied with anything else. There is nothing else large enough for you to write upon it the meanings and the sanctions and the purposes of God's healing mercy. But to look at it from man's side, the gospel that is to bring availing and abiding comfort to a world like ours needs a tremendous background: it

needs a transcendent sweep. If you have a doctrine of the divine immanence that veils the stars—that seems to make the truth of God a more familiar and compassable thing—that silences the challenge of God's lonely sovereignty and His transcendent and mysterious glory, you have not got the doctrine that will meet your deepest needs or win a response from the depths of other hearts. This shame-stricken, yearning world needs the glory of God as much as it needs His mercy. Jesus came to reveal both. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We can go back into the ages before Christ came, and learn from the psalmist how to apprehend and deliver the gospel of God's saving grace—how to interpret and apply God's final and complete message of healing, sent forth into the broken heart of the world. "He telleth the number of the stars. He healeth the broken in heart." The singer of that song linked the healing of man's broken heart with a profound and transcendent conception of God. And the healing of man's broken heart to-day is to be linked with a profound (not intellectually, but morally profound) and transcendent conception of Jesus Christ. Christian people need to be on their guard to-day lest the naturalistic atmosphere that we cannot help breathing (even if sometimes it nearly chokes us by its lack of oxygen) should lead us unconsciously to place a too humanitarian emphasis on the gospel of the divine Saviour. You may remind men that Jesus drew lessons for life from the lilies and the birds; how that He was glad to watch the patient oxen drawing the simple plow through the brown earth (just such a plow as He Himself had fashioned many a time in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth); how, maybe, He loved the smell of the fresh-turned furrow and the swing of the sower's arm as he scattered the seed; how He smiled on the little children and talked with the tanned and bearded fishermen on the shores of

Tiberias. But do not think that this is the story that brings Christ nearest to the heart of the world. We sing:

> Be with me when no other friend
> The mystery of my heart can share;
> And be Thou known when fears transcend,
> By Thy best name of Comforter.

In our weakest and loneliest hours, in the most inward and essential necessities of our lives, it is the mastery and the mystery of the eternity of Christ that we need.

> O to have watched Thee through the vineyards wander,
> Pluck the ripe ears and into evening roam;
> Followed, and known that in the twilight yonder,
> Legions of angels shone about Thy home.

How tremendously true are these words of the poet to the heart's real need and experience. This troubled world does not find peace at the feet of the gracious and inspired and morally perfect Prophet of Nazareth uttering words of wisdom amid the vineyards and in the path through the cornfields. In its profound spiritual sorrow and need, led by the instincts of a broken heart, it has followed the Christ home through the twilight of His humanity on into the glory of His divine Sonship and the light of His eternal dwelling-place. It is to the kingliest and profoundest and most transcendent words of Jesus that the human heart clings. Go to that devout man who lost his dearest friend but yesterday, and ask him what Scripture he read ere he went out this morning into a lonely world. But there! you need not ask him. You know what it was. "In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." Or go to that man whose heart is aching under the strain of terrible temptation, and ask him what word of the Nazarene is sheltering his soul, and maybe he will say unto you: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any

man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them unto Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and My Father are one." My friends, let us not think that by emphasizing the godhead of Christ we make him less real or less near to the hearts of the children of men. It is the godhead of Christ that keeps Him near us. It is the mystery of Christ that heals us.

Do not think those are foolish words, or that I am straining after a paradox. It is a matter of common knowledge that the central truth of the gospel—even the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the whole world—has been the focal point of the mightiest thought-conflict of all history. That conflict has not subsided. The thought of the Christian Church has not yet met in one common theory of the atonement. And you are well aware that the leaders in this fight have often been men of saintly lives, who have not failed to find perfect satisfaction and peace and hope at the cross of the world's Saviour. And if there is one paramount lesson to be learned from this battle, where many theories claim the right to account for one experience, it is this, that the Saviour has to pass our highest comprehension in order to meet our deep need. "He telleth the number of the stars. . . . . He healeth the broken in heart." Do not be afraid to put these two facts side by side. Do not be afraid to carry too divine and mysterious and ineffable a gospel to a suffering world. For it is to just such a gospel that the human heart will respond. That new school of theology to which I have already made reference has tried, in the interests of what it hoped would be nearer and clearer teaching, to draw a veil across all the mystic starry facts in the gospel story. It has said: "Men cannot believe in the incarnation of the Son of God. Science has made it impossible for men to believe in such a scientifically lawless event." But ages before science was born, sin and sorrow and the mysterious

fathomless needs of the human soul had made it impossible for men to believe in anything less stupendous and divine. It has said: "It is no good preaching a gospel of miracle in a clear thinking age like this." And it has given the world a Christ that few can understand and no one can trust. It has underrated human need. It has compassed the heart-broken with a thievish and impotent philosophy. It has overlooked the fact that a thing may be to a man at once and consciously an intellectual difficulty and a spiritual necessity. My friends, the Christian creed is not a great intellectual production: it is the voice of the Christian experience trying to utter the unutterable. It is the outcome not of what men have thought, but of what they have felt. It is full of that which baffles the mind of the dialectician and builds the life of the saint. And when men have spun their last specious and compassable theory of religion and of life, the weary and heartbroken children of men will be found breaking through the meshes of argument, sweeping away the human glosses from divine truth, and casting themselves instinctively upon that mystery of mercy and might that is as the mystery of the stars. Yes, and finding at the hands of the God who counts the stars, the touch of healing and the clasp of love.

GENERAL NOTES

I. **Impression.**—An exceedingly simple and beautiful sermon. One central truth is plainly stated; man in his weakness and suffering needs a sovereign God and a divine Christ. This truth is affirmed and presented with no effort after elegance of diction or oratory. The sermon is entirely different from the work of the other preachers whom we have studied; yet is none the less a sermon.

II. **Analysis.**—The analysis is elusive. The two divisions might be marked at page 176, line 145, and the conclusion may begin at page 178, line 214. If there is a plan it does not appear in any way. Yet in spite of the lack of suggestions for the analysis, we feel the structure of the sermon. There are no paragraph divisions. No formal announcements of subject or proposition are made.

X. **Material.**—Ainsworth has brooded on the text; he has experienced life with his people; he is sure of the needs of his own soul. Out of this great reservoir he draws the material for his sermon. There is no hint at great learning. This is a sermon drawn from life and designed to meet the needs of living men.

# PART II

# PRINCIPLES OF PREACHING

## METHODS OF WORK

As the result of the Sermon Studies carried out according to the directions contained in the Work Sheet, we have at hand eight reports on each of fifteen subjects.

Gather these reports in order and proceed to analyze, compare, and finally to systematize into definite conclusions and principles the findings contained in them. Use the inductive method of research that lies at the basis of all work in scientific and literary laboratories. The conclusions that the student reaches from his own sources and by the use of his own mind are his own findings and are worth vastly more than any counsels that he may receive even from the greatest teachers of homiletics. *The Sermon Studies furnish the raw material for original conclusions.* The accurate and painstaking handling of this material will finally determine the worth of the study for the individual student.

The following chapters are based on the Sermon Studies; but they are not meant to be either exhaustive or final. Every student who does faithful work in the Sermon Studies will not only correct and amplify the material in the following chapters but add new principles of his own. Remember the threefold task of scholarship: to know what is to be known on the subject, to correct old errors, to discover new truth.

## CHAPTER I

## THE SERMON

The first impression gained from the Sermon Studies is that preaching issues in a wide variety of product. The differences between the eight sermons are amazing. There is the short, gemlike work of Ainsworth and the long, elaborate discussion of Spurgeon; the classical work of Bushnell and the broad, free treatment of Beecher; the similarity of Robertson and Brooks; the delicately shaded repetitions of Chalmers and the doctrinal intensity of Newman. There can be but one conclusion: There is room in the Christian pulpit for the widest possible range of mind and method. No one type of preaching holds the field to the exclusion of all others. Variation is desirable. No preacher should ever copy another. Each must work out his own method and be true to his own genius and power to accomplish results. One form of preaching may win where another fails. The congregation as well as the preacher determines the sermon. Preaching is a delightful vocation because the range of freedom is so great. Take courage, and above all be yourself!

The second impression gained from our Sermon Studies is that we are dealing here with a particular literary form. It is unlike an oration, lecture, essay, or a chapter from a continued treatise or narrative.

A sermon is an oral message, incorporated into an order of worship, on a religious truth, directed to the popular mind with a view to a decision of the hearers

which shall lead them into the Christian experience, individually and socially.

The preacher is a messenger of good news; he is not a debater or teacher.[1] His sermon must bear the marks of deep conviction and moving urgency. The sermon is an integral part of an order of worship. This may be exceedingly simple; it may be elaborate; but it is essential as the setting of the sermon. A congregation is required for the sermon; this will be made up of all sorts of people; therefore the sermon should be prepared to meet the popular level of thought and feeling and lift it to noble decisions. The truth contained in the sermon should have the sanction of the Bible. The widest range of themes is warranted, but they should come from the field of religious truth. The sermon must be Christian. The sermon is directed to the whole personality: mind, emotion, and will. It seeks to convince the hearer, to move him to lofty feelings, and then to secure a decision for the truth that the sermon has brought to him. The aim of the preacher is like that of the lawyer, to secure a favorable verdict. The objective of the sermon, therefore, is to bring Christ to men and men to Christ in an experience that shall embrace the entire range of human relations. Every sermon seeks to actualize the ideal of the Lord's Prayer, "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"[2]

[1] "The preacher should preach that only which burns in his own heart. Every sermon should be a message. The other thing may be oratory, lecturing, dramatics, but it is not preaching."—Tilroe, *Sent Forth*, p. 42.

[2] The best-known definition of the sermon is that given by Professor Austin Phelps: "The sermon is an oral address to the popular mind,

Criticize the definitions given above. Write one of your own. Then test the last three sermons that you have preached according to this definition.

**The sermon and other literary forms.**—In order to make the character of the sermon more vivid in our thinking it is worth while to compare it with its most closely related literary forms, the oration, the lecture,[1] and the essay. In certain details the sermon shares the characteristics of all three; but it is marked off clearly from them by certain distinctions and there ought never to be any confusion as to their identity. The preacher is not merely the orator, lecturer, or essayist; the sermon is a literary and oratorical product by itself. The distinc-

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on religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion."

We have added the items of public worship and the objective of preaching in the realization of Christian experience, and have omitted the item concerning elaborate treatment. It will be noted also that we have not confined the truth in the sermon *exclusively* to that which is contained in the Bible. This is not intended to minimize or disparage biblical preaching. There are subjects, however, on which the modern preacher is bound to speak, which are not contained, except by inference, in the Bible; for example, many aspects of modern industrial life, democracy, prohibition, and ethical problems that arise in the complex civilization of today. Our definition is proposed, in comparison with that of Phelps, for the purpose of discussion rather than as a final statement; and this item should be subjected to critical examination by the student before it is accepted.

[1] "The 'lecture' in the pulpit is properly directed to conveying information and deepening knowledge. The sermon, however, aims at something more. Through the channel of the intellect the hearer is to be persuaded and convinced, to the end that motives become purified, the emotions exalted, the conscience quickened, and the will consecrated. To the factors that are educational the sermon must add the elements that are inspirational."—Berkowitz, *Intimate Glimpses of the Rabbi's Career*, Cincinnati, 1921, p. 85.

tions may be most quickly shown by the chart shown on the next page.

After careful study of this chart, state what the preacher may learn from the orator, the lecturer, and the essayist.

In what respect is the preacher in danger of confusing his work with that of the three workmen just mentioned and how is he to avoid the danger in each case?

**Parts of the sermon.**—The Sermon Studies reveal a general uniformity of parts.

*Title.*—This is necessary for the purpose of placing the sermon in a catalogue or naming it for identification. It may or may not be the same as the subject.

*Text.*—This is the passage of Scripture that contains or suggests the truth that is presented in the sermon. It may also indicate the development of the thought or the plan of the sermon.

*Subject.*—This is the general statement of that which the sermon is about, made specific enough so that it may be presented within the time and space allowed for a single discourse. For example, "Hope" would be a subject; but it is altogether too vast for discussion at one service of Christian worship. For the purpose of preaching, some aspect of it must be chosen, for example, "The Sources of Christian Hope." This may also be called the theme.

*Proposition.*—This is the shortest possible statement of the subject in the form of a declarative sentence. The proposition must be a complete sentence. For example, "The sources of Christian hope lie in the Bible, in the testimony of the Christian people, and in our present personal experience under the leadership of

| | Sermon | Oration | Lecture | Essay |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Speaker | Generally a clergyman; always a person with a message | Any person presenting a truth or promoting a cause | Any person seeking to reach hearers by oral address | Any person seeking to reach readers through printed matter |
| Subject | The Christian gospel, understood as an urgent message | Any worthy matter, civic, social, or political; may be for the promotion of the speaker's own interest | Any matter requiring public expression | Any matter. The widest range of subjects possible |
| Occasion and Audience | A service of worship, generally attended by religious people. Audience generally friendly | Any public occasion. Often connected with civic or social events. Audience sometimes hostile at the beginning | Any public occasion, generally in the interests of education or propaganda | Whenever it is possible to reach hearers or readers with a serious consideration of any subject. A reading public |
| Purpose | To bring hearers into union with Christ; to perfect that relationship; to realize the Kingdom of God | To convince hearers of the proposition or win them to the cause, often personal and sometimes selfish | To inform hearers or readers concerning the subject discussed. The mental powers addressed chiefly | To inform and sometimes to entertain. Seldom appealing for decision |
| Style | Elevated, beautiful, energetic, and impassioned, but never obtrusive | Clear, forceful, and beautiful; may be so marked that it becomes paramount | Clear and forceful. Should arrest attention, hold interest, leave definite impression | Style a primary factor. Printing allows careful writing and revision |
| Delivery | Oral from manuscript, memory, or *ex tempore* | Oral. Generally *ex tempore*. Marked by large oratorical freedom | Oral. Generally from manuscript. Deliberate and not primarily oratorical | Written and read. The author seldom present; therefore lacks the personal touch |

Christ." Such a proposition may also indicate the course of the discussion.

*Discussion or development.*—This is often called the "body" of the sermon. It is the principal part of the discourse and its preparation is the chief work of the preacher. The truth suggested by the text, phrased in the subject and explicitly stated in the proposition, is to be developed and presented in such a way that it will convince the mind, move the feelings, and sway the will of the congregation.

The discussion must move steadily forward. The steps by which the discussion proceeds are called the "points" of the sermon or the "heads" of the discourse. It was formerly the custom to develop a proposition at great length; often there were as many as seventeen or even twenty heads; now the sermon is generally shorter and the heads are from three to five.

*Conclusion.*—In the majority of thoroughly prepared sermons there is a definite conclusion, in which the truth which has been discussed is brought to bear upon the congregation in the effort to make it finally convincing and to secure a decision in its favor.

We shall treat these factors in the sermon more fully in the succeeding studies.

**Contents and form in the sermon.**—It is clear that we must consider the sermon in reference to its material and its form; what the preacher says and how he says it.[1]

[1] See Brander Matthews, *The Art of Versification*, p. 3: "Every work of art can be considered from two points of view. It has its content and it has its form. We may prefer to pay attention to what the artist has to say, or we may examine rather how he says it. The content of his work, what he has to say to us, is the more important, of course, but this may depend on his native gift, on his endowment; and it is more or less

This leads to an old distinction in the study of preaching. It may be devoted primarily to the material in the sermon; or it may be concerned with the literary form. In the former case it is called Material Homiletics; in the latter, Formal Homiletics.

Which factor are you inclined to neglect, the gathering of material for the sermon or its careful preparation?

Do you think that Professor Matthews is right in his claim that mastery of the forms of expression may be had as a result of hard work? Is not technical dexterity also a gift and the mastery of content or material also the result of hard work?

If either factor is to be slighted, which may be the more desirable, to have little to say and say it well, or to have much to say and express it poorly?

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beyond his control. He utters what he must utter; and he voices what he is inspired to deliver. But the form in which he clothes his message, how he says what he has to say—this is what he may choose to make it, no more and no less. This depends on him and on him alone; it is not a gift but an acquisition; it is the result of his skill, of the trouble he is willing to take, of his artistic integrity, of his desire to do his best always, and never to quit his work until he has made it as perfect as he can.

"This technical dexterity can be had for the asking;—or, at least, it can be bought with a price. It is the reward of intense interest, of incessant curiosity, of honest labor. And it is worth all that it costs, since we cannot really separate form from content, as we sometimes vainly imagine."

## CHAPTER II

## THE TEXT

**Theory and definition.**—Christian preaching grew out of, but also modified, the custom of the synagogue. The first followers of Jesus used a simple exposition of Scripture, the *homily*, where the text was "woven into" the discourse, as the literal meaning (Latin *textus* from *texo*, "to weave") implies. So the Latin fathers made a distinction between the *textus sacer* (sacred text) and the *homily* or exposition of it. Finally the conception of the Bible as the one source of truth for faith and life, especially after the Reformation, fixed the custom of either deriving all sermon subjects from the Bible or else finding in the Bible warrant for them.[1]

The text of the sermon is that portion of Scripture that suggests or sanctions the subject, and may also furnish the plan.

**Freedom in the use of texts.**—The Sermon Studies show the uniform use of a text but also reveal a wide range in their choice and use. Robertson handles his text accurately and his plan follows it, reversing the items. Bushnell shows how a text may be interpreted with a wealth of new meaning by the use of scholarship and imagination. Beecher uses a double text with discrimination. Chalmers might have made a

[1] The importance of the text may be inferred from the fact that Phelps, *The Theory of Preaching* (a classic in Homiletics) devotes 94 out of 588 pages, or over 16 per cent of the whole, to this item. The modern emphasis would not be so strong.

better choice. Spurgeon comes close to mutilation of his text. Newman plainly employs his as a proof-text. Ainsworth's is beautiful and noble. Brooks uses the figure of the text as the illuminating figure of his sermon.

In spite of this freedom, however, these eight preachers are masters in the use of texts. They do not use any that are trivial or weak. They honor their texts by treating them honestly. Robertson and Spurgeon drive their texts home and imprint them on the memory by frequent repetition.

**Danger in the use of texts.**—The preacher demands large liberty and wide range in his work. If he is confined to the uniform use of a text he may be cramped or crippled.[1] The uniform use of a text separates the sermon still farther from other forms of public address. Texts themselves tend to become lifeless when they are separated from the experience out of which they grew.[2] Their uniform use may intensify a dogmatic spirit in the preacher.

**Warrants for the use of texts.**—In spite of these dangers it is best to use a text for the following reasons.

[1] For example, how can the Bible be expected to furnish adequate texts out of the simple experience of the Jewish people and the early Christians for problems arising from democracy, the industrial revolution, an age dominated by the scientific spirit, and the complex and baffling problems that come with the development of Western civilization? Or, do the prophets and Jesus furnish all that is required to meet even this situation? See a similar suggestion for discussion on page 186, note.

[2] "Such glowing experiences as these are hard to communicate; they, too, soon harden down and we inherit, as cold and rigid form, what was to begin with the flaming outcome of experience."—ATKINS, *Modern Religious Cults and Movements*, p. 26.

It is not foreign to the practice of the great orators. Phelps shows that the text may serve a similar purpose to that which Webster carried out, when, in his reply to Hayne, he began by saying, "Mr. President, I call for the reading of the resolution before the Senate." This not only brought the attention of his hearers to a focus but gave an effective answer to all that had been foreign to the question in the preceding harangue. The Bible never becomes antiquated. It is familiar to the congregation, although growing less so. The language of the Authorized Version is dignified and noble. The text introduces the subject quickly and creates a presumption in its favor. A unified text aids in the quick preparation of a unified plan. All Christian truth finds its finest expression in the Bible.

**Must every sermon have a text?**—No. Occasionally it is safe practice to take a text outside the Bible.[1] That which makes a sermon Christian is not the fact that it is furnished with a text, but the spirit of the preacher and the content of the message. Great sentences from the *Te Deum Laudamus*, the Apostle's Creed, hymns of the faith, noble utterances of Christians, may occasionally be taken. For example, Newman's reference (p. 156, ll. 78–80); or Carey's superb sentence, "*Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.*" John Clifford has a sermon with a text from the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" (*World's Great Sermons*, Vol. VIII, p. 123). J. Morgan

[1] Christlieb dissents positively. He says: "Church formularies, hymns or sayings are not suitable for independent texts of sermons, but are to be made serviceable in their expansion, and brought occasionally into the light of the text."—*Homiletic*, 1897, p. 151.

Gibbon preached a notable sermon from the words "Our Lord Jesus Christ," which gave him this plan:

I. Jesus of Nazareth
II. Jesus is the Christ
III. Jesus Christ is our Saviour and Lord[1]

Such variations give interest to preaching; but they are to be used sparingly.

**Principles governing the choice of texts.**—In addition to those already noted, observe the following:

1. Avoid being influenced by the mere temporary interests of either the preacher or groups in the congregation to such an extent that the permanent needs of the whole parish are overlooked. The last book read or the particular interest of the moment must not be the supreme influence in the choice of texts and subjects. On the other hand, a definite recognition of the interests of the preacher and congregation is legitimate in the selection of texts. "Fads" must be avoided and real interests conserved by a discriminating preacher.

2. Let the text "find" you as well as finding the text. The primary question is not what you will do with the text, but what the text will do with you. John Watson said, "It is not the man who selects the text. It is the text which selects the man."[2]

3. Avoid any text whose authenticity is questionable[3] (e.g., John 7:53—8:11; Matt. 16:13; I John 5:7);

[1] *The Veil and the Vision*, p. 3.

[2] Quoted in Breed, *Preparing to Preach*, p. 27.

[3] An interesting use of an unauthentic text may be found in Norwood, *Moods of the Soul*, p. 30, in which the preacher states at considerable length that I John 5:7 does not appear in the best translations, is apparently a gloss, but is used nevertheless "because it sums up in one sentence,

or inaccurate in the translation of the Authorized Version (e.g., Prov. 8:15, where the word *early* should be *diligently*, thus making the text inapt concerning early piety; Phil. 1:27, where *conversation* should be *manner of living*, thus spoiling an otherwise perfectly good sermon on "The Vice of Gossip").

4. Choose the great, edifying texts, as Brooks unfailingly did. There is no danger that the supreme texts of the Bible will be overworn. John 3:16; 14:1; Ps. 91:1; Isa. 40:30, 31, cannot be hackneyed. They still evoke the strongest thought and the best work that a modern minister can give to them.

5. Choose interesting texts, the development of whose essential meaning may involve the factor of surprise. Isa. 45:5, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me," was the text from which Bushnell developed his famous sermon entitled "Every Man's Life a Plan of God." Often an apparent obscurity in a text may be cleared up by a swift paragraph of explanation, which will create interest in the subject and stimulate both preacher and congregation.

6. Choose complete sentences and do not mutilate them.

7. If multiple texts are chosen, take great care in making them actually complementary. R. J. Campbell is expert in their use. In *City Temple Sermons*, ten out of twenty-three sermons have multiple texts (e.g., Isa. 43:2, "When thou passest through the waters I will

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as it were, the expression of the three modes in which God manifests Himself to men." This is the use of a text with no reliance upon any especial authority inhering in it by virtue of its place in the authentic Scriptures of the Christian people.

be with thee"; John 16:20, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Subject: "The Mystery of Pain." A second instance is: Job 14:14, "If a man die, shall he live again?" John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Subject: "Personal Immortality").

**Interpretation of texts.**—The first principle to be preserved is *fidelity to the writer's meaning*. The preacher must get the true meaning out of the text and never read a foreign meaning into it. When a text has been chosen, if it cannot be interpreted in the original language, analyze and parse the English sentence. Many a sermon would be saved and sanctified if it were only subjected to the rigor of English grammar. Use the dictionary until every word is understood; pay especial attention to the conjunctions and prepositions (perhaps the most important word in Rom. 12:1 is "therefore"). Prepositions are small words; but they express the relations of parts of the sentence and are of great moment in determining the meaning.

The second principle is *selection of the essential truth in the passage*. Nearly every text contains several factors; but there is always one of central significance. This is the truth to be developed and discussed in the sermon. If those factors which are accidental crowd into the discourse the highest value of the text is dissipated.

The third principle is *freedom*. That is, *the text is the preacher's servant and he is not its slave*. The purpose of the text is to release a central and vital truth, and offer a free path for its development. As a preacher gains experience, he masters the ability to make his text an inspiration and incentive to keen and constructive thought.

**Perversion of texts.**—There are many ways in which a text may be mishandled. One is to neglect it after announcement, making it a mere motto, pretext, or point of departure. If a text is chosen at all it ought to be carried on through the sermon. An essay is not made into a sermon by putting a text at its beginning. Texts are most honored by being consistently and honestly treated throughout the discourse.

Another frequent cause of perversion is by the neglect of context; e.g., Col. 2:21, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," has often been used as a text sanctioning abstinence from physical indulgence, without regard to Paul's statement that such ordinances are of no value when compared with the power that comes from union with Christ.

Still another, and perhaps the most frequent form of text perversion, is through allegorizing. In order to make this clear we present two treatments of Mark 7:33, 34, the healing of the deaf and dumb man in Decapolis. The first is by Spurgeon, with the title, "The Plan of Salvation for Lost Men."

I. Jesus took him aside.
   The soul must be led into loneliness.

II. Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears.
   Sinners must be shown the seat of their trouble.

III. Jesus spat.
   The gospel is simple and often despised.
   The sinner must receive it humbly.

IV. Jesus touched his tongue.
   Sense of need grows.

V. Jesus looked to heaven.
   All hope for sinners is from above.

VI. Jesus sighed.
The suffering of Jesus necessary to healing.

VII. Be opened.
The word of grace is with power.

The second is by Alexander Maclaren, with the title, "The Pattern of Service."

I. The heavenward look.

II. The sigh of compassion.

III. The touch of pity.

IV. The word of power.

The following discriminating counsel may well be used in summing up this point.

For instance if, as the preacher reads the words, "He shall show you an upper room furnished,"[1] it strikes him with a flash that Christ's Gospel not only lights up the ideal world over him, but stocks it with the content of positive truth for our spiritual dwelling and use, by all means let him preach a sermon to that effect from the text. But let it be clear that he is using some sacred fancy in so doing. And let him realize that such a treatment of the Bible is on a very different footing from that which he employs if he preach on central words like these: "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

[1] Mark 14:15.

[2] Forsyth, *Positive Preaching in the Modern Mind*, 1907, p. 32. The question will inevitably arise, however, and ought to be discussed at this point: Why, if it is a sacred fancy, not preach on it as such, without reference to or use of the text at all? How is a sermon on a sacred fancy given any peculiar weight or sanction because it is provided with the text that suggested the fancy? This involves the discussion of the whole matter of the "accommodation" of texts.

## CHAPTER III

## THE TITLE AND SUBJECT

**The sermon title.**—Every sermon must be provided with a title. This is necessary in order that it may be announced and catalogued for preservation. Our Sermon Studies show that in every case, excepting, possibly, Ainsworth, the title is the same as the subject. More variety might have been brought into the treatment of the sermon, however, if there had been a change in the phrasing of the title and subject. "Star Counting and Heart Healing" is an interesting title; the subject might have been "Divine Sources of Human Comfort." "The Light of the World" conveys no uncertain meaning if it is clearly understood to be a sermon title; the subject, however, might have been "Human Values Revealed by the Light of Christ."

**Importance of the title.**—Book publishers recognize the great value of titles; the success or failure of a book is often determined by the title chosen. So the attractiveness of a sermon is conditioned largely upon the choice of the title. On the one hand, we see a tendency to choose vivid and sensational titles, which will not merely arrest attention but startle the community; this is a part of the general promotion program of church work which employs such terms as "to sell" religion and the gospel. On the other hand, preachers are often careless of the significance of the title in its appeal to the interest of audiences. It is a rare gift that enables a preacher

to select such titles as will be vital, interesting, timely, and also conform to the laws of good taste and dignity. With careful thought and continued practice a preacher ought to become resourceful and accurate in the phrasing of sermon titles; certainly this involves one's best possible thought and practice.

The principles on which titles and subjects are to be chosen are so nearly identical that we shall proceed to consider them together. In the vast majority of sermons there is no difference to be observed; the preacher has simply given the subject for a title. It would doubtless have been better if greater variety had been secured; but the same principles obtain in reference to both title and subject.

**The sermon subject.**—Before studying the material from Part I, the meaning of the word "subject" calls for a brief discussion. We use it here as the term most clearly indicating what the sermon is about. The words "theme" and "topic" are also current. The relation between subject and theme is defined by Genung in rhetoric and by Hoyt in homiletics as follows:

> The subject is the general or class-idea on which the production is based, the most unrestricted answer to the question, "What shall I write about?" Thus, for example, one may write about Anglo-Saxons, or about Self-Reliance, or about Free-Trade, or about Modern Fiction; these are subjects. Evidently such subjects as these, as they exist unmodified, are too comprehensive, too general for treatment. They contain no hint of one kind of treatment more than another; no indication of fitness of place, public, or form of discourse; no suggestion of limits or direction. It is clear

that they are not yet in shape to guide the writer as his working-idea.[1]

The words "subject" and "theme" are used by many interchangeably, but it is a loose use of terms, the result of hazy thought and indefinite aim. The subject is general; the theme is particular. "Faith" is a subject; "The Promptitude of Faith" is a theme. "Faith" is broad and general; it makes no affirmation or denial, it suggests no limits or purpose. "The Promptitude of Faith" is specific, gives definite relations, and has an unmistakable purpose.[2]

Hoyt criticizes Robertson's sermon on "Worldliness" which, he says, is engaged with the actual theme "Why the Christian cannot love the world."

The force of this distinction is apparent. On the other hand one recalls instinctively the familiar essays of Emerson, "Love," "Heroism," "Intellect," "Art." Also, keeping company with Robertson, are James Stalker, "Temptation" (*World's Great Sermons*, IX, 165); John Watson, "Optimism" (*ibid.*, p. 199); Beecher, "Immortality" (*ibid.*, VI, 1). A close study of these sermons shows, however, that the real matter discussed is far more closely defined than the general terms would indicate.

The term "topic" is frequently used and is practically identical with "theme."

We shall employ the word "subject" here in the restricted sense of the "theme" or "topic," recognizing the distinctions noted above, but feeling that the current usage, "sermon subject," is generally clear and that to

[1] Genung, *Practical Elements of Rhetoric*, p. 249.

[2] Hoyt, *The Work of Preaching*, new edition, 1917, pp. 87–106.

substitute the word "theme" would confuse rather than clarify the matter.

**Additional subjects for study.**—The eight subjects already studied are numbered and printed below, and are followed by the subjects in Bushnell, *Sermons for the New Life*.

1. Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge
2. Unconscious Influence
3. The Light of the World
4. The Expulsive Power of a New Affection
5. What Is Christ to Me?
6. Songs in the Night
7. Christ, the Son of God Made Man
8. Star Counting and Heart Healing
9. Every Man's Life a Plan of God
10. The Spirit in Man
11. The Dignity of Human Nature Shown from Its Ruins
12. The Hunger of the Soul
13. The Reason of Faith
14. Regeneration
15. The Personal Love and Lead of Christ
16. Light on the Cloud
17. The Capacity of Religion Extirpated by Disuse
18. Obligation a Privilege
19. Happiness and Joy
20. The True Problem of Christian Experience
21. The Lost Purity Restored
22. Living to God in Small Things
23. The Power of an Endless Life
24. Respectable Sin
25. The Power of God in Self-Sacrifice
26. Duty Not Measured by Our Own Ability
27. He That Knows God Will Confess Him

28. The Efficiency of the Passive Virtues
29. Spiritual Dislodgments
30. Christ as Separate from the World

A study of these thirty subjects leads to the following conclusions:

1. Wide variety is necessary. The range of preaching is exceedingly broad. The subjects pertinent and vital to the Christian life are innumerable. This makes preaching a fascinating task.

2. Subjects must be clear. Is 1 obscure? Is 8 too indefinite? Is 29 hazy? On the other hand, a certain touch of mystery or suggestiveness is desirable. Note the allurement in 8; the challenge of 9; the suggestiveness of 11.

3. Subjects should not contain technical terms. Note the philosophical term in 1. Does 4 suggest a psychological problem? Is 28 open to the same criticism? Study 11 and 26 and note the theological discussion out of which they came. Is it pertinent now? Who cares about it? Is the word "extirpated" in 17 undesirable?

4. Subjects should be attractive to a wide range of people and not offensively dogmatic. But study 7, 9, 17, 23, 27, 30. Is there not a positive and even dogmatic suggestion here that will attract hearers? Do not people want a subject that is affirmative and dogmatic? What is the golden mean in this respect?

5. The subject should plainly indicate what the sermon is about, and the preacher must stick to his subject consistently. Would you be uncertain about 6, 8, 29? Which seems to you the clearest subject in the group?

6. In the light of the distinctions made by Genung and Hoyt, criticize 14.

7. Which of these subjects would attract you most if you saw it in a newspaper or bulletin board? Why? Which would attract you least? Why?

8. Grotesque subjects must be avoided. Yet there is a real place for the "sensational" subject, that is, the subject that produces a real movement in mind or emotions, leading a hearer to give attention to the subject. The modern practice of using lurid or "catchy" subjects is not to be commended. Paraphrasing the titles of popular plays and slogans is common. "How Hot Is Hell?" may arrest attention; but it is unworthy a dignified and earnest pulpit.

9. State in other terms the subjects of 17, 22, 27, 7.

10. In the light of these thirty subjects, what changes are necessary in modern preaching? What new subjects must be handled today? Name at least five.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE PROPOSITION

**Definition.**—The proposition is the statement, in its concisest possible form and by a complete sentence, of the subject that is to be discussed in the sermon.

It has been compared to the action of the heart in the physical body. Its place in the sermon is vital and organic. It must not be omitted or neglected.

**The proposition in sermon preparation.**—It is apparent from the Sermon Studies that a proposition does not often appear as a formal part of the sermon, definitely announced and precisely stated. Such a proposition may have been in the preacher's mind; he may have used it in the preparation of his sermon; but it does not appear as a distinct rhetorical factor in the sermon as preached. Therefore it is apparent that there is a difference between the place of the proposition in the preparation and in the delivery of the sermon.

A proposition is not necessary in every sermon as it is delivered; but it is absolutely essential in the process of sermon preparation; and it would be a source of added force and finish if every sermon when delivered contained a definite and formal proposition.[1]

The one place where the value of the proposition is unquestioned, therefore, is in the preparation of the

[1] By this is meant a regular sermon delivered as part of an order of public worship. Funeral discourses, historical and biographical addresses, expository sermons, and sermons on occasions do not call for a proposition.

sermon. As soon as the text, the subject, or both, have been defined, the first draft of a proposition should be made. Into one declarative sentence, clear and cogent, put the truth which you mean to bring out in the sermon. The first draft of the proposition will probably contain more factors than are needed; it may not place them in the most convincing order; but it should contain all that is essential to the sermon, no less and no more, and no other than the truth in the subject, stated in cumulative order. This first draft will probably be changed, perhaps many times; but it is the final statement of the truth in the sermon.

**Additional propositions for study.**—Chalmers alone of the eight preachers studied uses a formal proposition. For the purpose of further study the following formal introductions are given:

The Catholic Church is triumphing now in America, and in Ireland, and in the colonies of the British Empire: aye, and in the midst of confusions in Spain, and in France through revolution after revolution, and in the furnaces of infidelity: aye, and in Germany, in the midst of all that the might of man can do against it, and in Italy, too, where the head of the Church is morally a prisoner, it is triumphing even now.—MANNING, "The Triumph of the Church," *World's Great Sermons*, V, 63.

The petition, therefore, "Thy will be done," contains the doctrine:

That it is greatly to be desired that God should govern the world, and dispose of men, in all respects, entirely according to His own pleasure.—LYMAN BEECHER, "The Government of God Desirable," *World's Great Sermons*, IV, 3.

In this discourse I wish to show that the character of Christ, taken as a whole, is one which could not have entered the thoughts of man, could not have been imagined or feigned; that it bears every mark of genuineness and truth; that it ought therefore to be acknowledged as real and of divine origin.—CHANNING, "The Character of Christ," *World's Great Sermons*, IV, 29.

In actual Christianity,—that is, in that portion of Christianity which is preached and believed,—there seems to have been, ever since the time of its earthly Founder, two elements, the one transient, the other permanent. The one is the thought, the folly, the uncertain wisdom, the theological notions, the impiety of man, the other, the eternal truth of God.—THEODORE PARKER, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," *World's Great Sermons*, V, 149.

The truth I propose then for your consideration is this: That God has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him, visibly or invisibly, for some exact thing which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished.—BUSHNELL, "Every Man's Life a Plan of God," *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 10.

My subject is, *the spirit in man*, or what is the same, the fact *that we are, as being spirit, permeable and inspirable by the Almighty*.—BUSHNELL, "The Spirit in Man," *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 30.

In this view I propose a discourse on the *reason of faith;* or to show *how it is that we, as intelligent beings, are called to believe; and how, as sinners, we can in the nature of things be saved only as we believe*.—BUSHNELL, "The Reason of Faith," *Sermons for the New Life*, p. 88.

**Principles derived from the studies.**—(1) The propositions studied above reveal "one structure, a whole, not a

congeries of alien particles." The first principle of construction is *unity*. All the parts of the proposition must have centripetal force, that is, there must be just one center of thought. A unified proposition will practically insure unity of discussion. Vinet said, "The discourse is the proposition unfolded, and the proposition is the discourse condensed."

2. The proposition must be *accurate*. Every word, every phrase, every factor of the sentence or sentences must be studied, tested, and fully justify its claim to use before it is admitted. Avoid obscure and controversial terms.[1] Keep the right emphasis.

3. The proposition must be *clear*. The preacher lives in a world of his own, with its vocabulary and areas of familiar thought. The fact that terms are clear to him does not insure their clearness to others. Use the strong, simple, current words. Test the proposition by the standards and usages of daily life.

4. The proposition must be *interesting*. While, naturally we do not stress the idea of interest in this element of the sermon so much as we do elsewhere, it must not be neglected. The proposition must be clear and concise; but it gains if it is also immediately appealing to the interest of the hearers. Therefore, study the form in which you put the proposition and see if it cannot be changed, in case you fear that it lacks those elements which will appeal to the congregation at once and enlist their attention and interest. A quaint proposition of Latimer is of this sort: "Love is the livery of the servants of Christ."

[1] Avoid words ending in *tion:* differentiation, motivation, etc. Also the "language of Zion."

5. Many propositions are *blended into* the introduction. Bushnell, as seen above, was a master in this art. The majority of modern sermons use the proposition in this way. It adds interest and charm to the discourse, and is probably the best method for general use in the pulpit.

6. A clear and forceful proposition aids in securing *unity and progress* in the sermon, two qualities which are often neglected. The propositions studied above reveal a fine fusion of these. Note the way in which Manning swings steadily onward in the marshaling of the factors in his proposition; it moves. Note the way in which Parker keeps his contrasts vivid and how he makes the second factor dominate the first, as it should in order to achieve progress. Note the final illustration from Bushnell, as it develops the second clause in relation to the first, and thus insures progress in the discussion.

Therefore true unity calls for orderly and evident progress. When these have been incorporated into the proposition we have the fullest warrant for confidence that they will be maintained in the discussion. Indeed, the major problems of sermon development are solved in the framing of the proposition.

## CHAPTER V

# THE INTRODUCTION

**Definition and warrant.**—The introduction is that part of the sermon which leads into the discussion of the proposition.[1] It is essential to a complete sermon. This purpose makes it clear that the introduction is not necessarily *all* that precedes the discussion of the subject. There may often be explanatory or preliminary statements concerning the text, the occasion, or related subjects, which are not introductions in the strict sense of the word. Yet an introduction may consist of an explanatory statement when it actually leads into the discussion.

John Bright considered the introduction to be so important that he generally wrote this part of his speeches with the greatest care. He felt that if he made the right approach he had taken the most important single step in presenting his subject.

An introduction to a sermon is demanded for the following reasons.

1. The human mind always approaches subjects gradually. We cannot have truth hurled at us and understand it. All great friendships grow out of introductions of one kind and another. We always lead up to important subjects in conversation. All successful

[1] "An introduction is that part of a discourse which is designed to prepare an audience for agreement in opinion, and for sympathy in feeling, with the preacher on the subject of the discourse."—PHELPS, *Theory of Preaching*, p. 223.

salesmanship demands that the right approach and point of contact be found.

2. The preacher himself must come to his discussion of the subject by a gradual approach and not "head on." It clarifies the truth for the preacher when he approaches it step by step.

3. The introduction is necessary in order to focus the attention and sustain the interest of the congregation.

What a task the preacher faces! All ages and grades of appreciation and varieties of temperament are before him. During the week the people have been thinking of all sorts of subjects and their minds are still occupied with them. They come to the morning service under the impulse of varying emotions. The service up to the time of the sermon is the best preparation for its delivery; but the preacher knows also that he has a well-nigh impossible task at hand as he seeks to unite all the minds of the people in the subject which he is to present. He cannot do this, except in rare instances, unless he approaches his subject in the right way.

**Additional materials for study.**—Of the eight sermons which we have studied, seven are provided with introductions. In order to make the range of study somewhat wider, the following four examples are added.

1. J. H. Jowett, *Behind and Before:*

"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me."—Ps. 139:5.

"Thou has beset me behind." He deals with the enemy in the rear, the foe that lurks in my yesterdays. He does not ignore the dark heritage that bears down upon me from the past. "And before!" He deals with the enemy in the front, the foe that seems to hide in my tomorrows. "And

laid Thine hand upon me!" He deals with the immediate contingency, and gives me a present consciousness of ample defence and security.[1]

2. Percy Ainsworth, *The Wilderness and the Sunrise:*

"And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-Abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, towards the sun-rising."—Num. 21:11.

Let us get away from the geography of this passage. When we have done that the passage reads like this—"They journeyed . . . . in the wilderness . . . . towards the sun-rising!" That is no longer simply the story of an ancient nomadic people. It is an epitome of life in God's hands. It is the divinity of existence. It is a parable of providence and grace. It would be easy to show how this reading of our text is illustrated in the story of Israel. But I propose frankly to look at it in the light of Christ. The teaching of Jesus is full of the tremulous light of the dawn. It was a dawn-gospel that He preached. It was the coming day that He heralded. The true Christian theology is ever flushed with the sunrise.[2]

3. W. J. Dawson, *Christ among the Common Things of Life:*

"As soon then as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine."—John 21:9, 12.

I cannot read these words without indulging for a moment in a reminiscence. Not long ago, in the early morning, while all the world slept, I stood beside the Sea of Tiberias, just as the morning mist lifted, and watched a single brown-sailed fishing-boat making for the shore, and the tired fishermen dragging their net to land. In that moment it seemed to me

[1] *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, p. 25.

[2] *The Pilgrim Church*, p. 244.

as if more than the morning mist lifted—twenty centuries seemed to melt like mist and the last chapter of St. John's gospel seemed to enact itself before my eyes. For so vivid was the sense of something familiar in the scene, so mystic was the hour, that I scarce would have been surprised had I seen a fire of coals burning on the shore, and heard the voice of Jesus inviting these tired fishermen to come and dine.[1]

4. Lorenzo Dow. An incident:

Lorenzo Dow was an old-time and famous mountain preacher. The following story describes his novel method in making an introduction to a sermon:

He began by saying, "My text is Philippians four, thirteen. 'I can do all things.'"

Then he produced a bill from his wallet and said, "Paul, that's simply preposterous; I'll wager this that you can't do anything of the sort."

Then he opened his Bible again and read, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

On reading this, he placed the bill again in his wallet, saying, "So? I withdraw my offer. Of course you can. Anybody can do anything by the help of God."

He then proceeded with his subject.[2]

**Principles derived from preceding studies.**—From the eleven examples which we have studied, the following principles are drawn.

1. Introductons must be concise and clear. Any obscurity at the beginning is fatal to clearness in the subsequent discussion. Chalmers uses a difficult introduction, not to be commended. Jowett and Ainsworth are well-nigh perfect examples of exegetical comment,

[1] *World's Great Sermons*, X, 81.

[2] D. J. Burrell, *The Sermon*, p. 114.

rather than definite introduction, which leads directly into the discussion. Newman adapts his thought to the temper of his people.

2. Introductions should be short. The longest is Robertson, 25 per cent of the sermon. Brooks and Chalmers use 3.5 per cent; Beecher, 7 per cent; Spurgeon, 10 per cent; Newman, 12.5 per cent; Bushnell, 14 per cent. Dawson is brief.

Younger preachers often prepare the introduction at too great length. The entrance to the house is larger than the house itself. It takes a long discipline of experience to learn how to hold in reserve the resources that flow readily to the mind of the preacher.

Lyman Abbott said:

> As to introductions, generally the less introduction the better. The whole service of prayer and praise and Scripture reading has been introduction; that is, it has been preparing the mind and heart of the congregation for the message of the preacher. He who strikes the heart of his subject in the first sentence is most likely to secure an attentive listening at the outset of his discourse.[1]

3. Introductions must be unified. Robertson is a conspicuous example of such unity. Spurgeon is also successful. Reject every factor in an introduction that may divert the movement of thought straight into the discussion.

4. Dawson shows how a personal touch may be used; but only an artistic literary craftsman can do it well, and such references should be seldom used.

5. The quaint device of Dow serves only to show that on the rarest occasions some unusual means may

[1] *The Christian Ministry*, 1905, p. 215.

be employed to arrest attention and create interest. No student ought to be encouraged ever to try it. Here, however, is an original suggestion as effective as it is deft:

This exquisite passage is like a flower which one is almost afraid to touch, lest he should spoil the delicate bloom. Yet to disturb the flower may awake a fragrance and distribute it to others. My treatment shall be a gentle shaking of the flower, if perchance its inherent fragrance may captivate our spiritual senses and allure us to the heart of its gracious truth.[1]

6. The first sentence is generally short and interesting, although Chalmers starts with a sentence of ninety-nine words. Simplicity of style marks the first sentences. It is no place for rhetorical effects. A misunderstood word at first may seriously impair the whole sermon.

7. Never apologize in an introduction. To state that the time for preparation has been inadequate or that the subject is too great for one's powers is unpardonable. Burrell says: "An apology is like the vermiform appendix; if it has any proper function, nobody has yet been able clearly to define it."[2]

**Preparing the introduction.**—The introduction should generally be written last of all rather than first. When the body of the sermon has been prepared then only do we fully know what we have to introduce. Thus the preface of a book is generally written last.[3]

Extreme care should be taken with it, especially with the first sentence. Charles Reynolds Brown says:

In my own practice, while I never use a manuscript in preaching, there are five sentences in my sermon which

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, p. 231.

[2] *The Sermon*, p. 115. [3] Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 144.

I always write out in advance and know by heart—the first one and the last four. I like to begin, if I can, with a sentence as good as I know how to make it, so that the first ball may be pitched, if possible, right over the plate and at the proper level. And I want to have the last four sentences definitely in mind so that I may not be left circling around in the air, like some helpless crow, flying to and fro above a rail fence where the stakes have all been sharpened, seeking in vain for a suitable place to light.[1]

**The spirit of the introduction.**—The temper of the preacher will be revealed at no point more clearly than in the introduction. The qualities of courtesy and good-will ought to be evident here, therefore, beyond any question. It is seldom necessary to seek to conciliate a congregation of worshipers, as may easily be the case with an audience to whom an orator is speaking. Nevertheless, it is sometimes the case that a preacher scolds or is petulant in the beginning of his sermon. This is a fault that is never to be tolerated. Freedom from flattery on the one hand and fault-finding on the other are alike desirable moods in which to write a sermon introduction.

[1] Brown, *The Art of Preaching*, p. 113.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE CONCLUSION

**Definition.**—The conclusion is that part of the discourse in which the discussion is drawn to a close and the truth is fitted to life.

Thus the conclusion gives a new and final turn to the development of the proposition. We must be sure, therefore, that we have not finished before we conclude. This sometimes happens. The conclusion is a part of the organic structure of the sermon. It is an established law of oratory that the oration shall have a definite and positive conclusion; the sermon is under the same regulation.

The conclusion ought to bear the truth home to the minds and hearts and wills of hearers with all the concentration and force that the preacher can muster. At this point weakness is unpardonable.

The conclusion gives the supreme opportunity to the orator. The rhetorical conclusion makes possible the oratorical drive.

**Additional examples for study.**—The following are examples of formal conclusions, which are given here in order to supply added examples to the eight already furnished:

Distracted, weary soul, you are fleeing from the very thing you want. Do not seek to fly beyond this sea and sky. It is your home; rest in its beauty, enjoy its spacious freedom, delight in its wide expanse; you could not be content with

any lesser home. Do not beat your wings against the dawn, hoping to quench the growing light or to shield your eyes from its beams. Mount up with wings as an eagle; dare to gaze upon the sun. This is God, your life, your rest, your joy.

"Ah fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."[1]

And for myself I should covet being the kind of man who cannot be happy if he knows that his mode of action, or of feeling, is in conflict with that loving kindness and justice and fairness which, according to our Bible, and according to our blessed Lord, are the basis of this present world-order, and indeed the skirts of the garment of God.[2]

**Principles derived from the Sermon Studies.**—The ten examples given furnish material for the following general principles:

1. The uniform dignity and beauty of conclusions is apparent. These are the most highly finished part of the sermons studied. The worth of this factor demands that it shall be given paramount attention. The great orators and preachers have so regarded the conclusion.

2. Conclusions must be prepared with the utmost attention to their effectiveness in the sermon. It is said that Burke re-wrote twenty times the conclusion of his defense of Queen Caroline. It is most hazardous to trust to the moment for the language of the conclusion.

[1] Orchard, "The Inescapable God," from *Sermons on God, Christ and Man*, p. 54.

[2] Hutton, "The One Ground of Confidence," from *The Victory over Victory*, p. 106.

It need not necessarily be memorized; but the language as well as the thought must receive most careful preparation.

3. Beecher and Chalmers both use a vivid and noble figure for the conclusion. This is effective when it is well done. There is danger that it may not be strong or apt enough; also that it may be done too often. Such a concluding figure must be studied with the greatest care. Be sure that excessive details are not introduced.

4. The majority of the conclusions drive directly at the will and therefore seek for a decision. The preacher is an advocate. He wants his truth to effect changes in the lives of those who hear him. The final decision will depend upon the way in which the mind has been convinced and the feelings moved. The whole person is the object of influence in the sermon; but the will is the point of attack in the conclusion.

5. It is often effective to introduce a personal element into the conclusion; but this must be done with the utmost of modesty and reserve. Hutton does this with fine taste.

6. The factor of passion appears at its highest in the conclusion. It may be the fervid appeal of the evangelist as in Spurgeon; it may be the more restrained but no less earnest drive on the will by Newman; but in all cases there is the glow of deep feeling and the expression of the preacher's earnestness in its most complete form.

7. The conclusion is the great point of *climax* in both rhetoric and oratory. The most cogent reasoning and the tenderest appeals must issue at last in the conclusion. Its style must be energetic and its material vital. In no

case should the conclusion introduce *new* elements, aside from those that have been developed in the discussion.

8. The study of many modern sermons reveals a tendency to use a poem as the conclusion. For example, in Shannon, *The Enchanted Universe*, seven out of the twelve sermons close with a poem. In the case of a preacher whose taste is so accurate and range of knowledge so wide as Dr. Shannon's this is neither ineffective nor monotonous; but it is not wise to use a poem for a conclusion more frequently than once in six or seven times. Beware of sameness in the use of any particular method.

9. One of the most familar forms of the conclusion is a prayer, in which the appeal for decision is cast into a brief petition for divine aid in carrying it out. If this is not used too frequently and if the form is not stereotyped, we have a fine union of prayer and devotion in this method. The words, "God grant that we may" do thus and so, may become void of meaning, however; and uniformity in conclusions is as undesirable as it is in all other parts of the sermon.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE PLAN

It is apparent from the Studies that the sermon should have a plan according to which the thought is discussed for the purpose of convincing hearers of its validity. The plan unfolds the proposition according to the laws of right thinking.

In each sermon except Ainsworth, no difficulty is experienced in discovering the plan. It is fully announced, as in Spurgeon; indicated, as in Bushnell; entirely concealed, as in Ainsworth. But it is there, lying back of, and under, the discussion, as the skeleton is *felt* in the case of a painted or sculptured human figure. And as the sculptor or painter undergoes a long discipline learning anatomy, so the preacher ought to discipline himself until he is, first, wholly familiar with the bony structure of a severely logical sermon, and then, in the second place, exceedingly skilful in so manipulating his framework that it will not be obtrusive. The common method of always announcing points and divisions should not become a slavish practice. In the end that is the best art that conceals art.

Another way of stating this fact is to say that the plan is like the architect's blue print which is put into the hands of the builder to guide him in construction; only, in this case, the architect and builder is the same person. The difference between the material as it lies in the lumber yard and the finished building depends upon the use of a plan.

No plan will include all that the preacher knows or could say on the subject, but only such an amount of material as will issue in the conclusive discussion of the proposition. There are sermons of an "encyclopedia" sort, with no proper selection and arrangement of matter: these are not well planned.

The plan may be either mental or written. It is possible to have a plan which is not put on paper; but this is rarely the case. Sermon plans should be written out. The following is an excellent method of procedure in preparing the plan.

1. As soon as the subject is clearly enough defined to warrant a statement of it and the first draft of a proposition, write a rough sketch of the way the thought lies in your mind. This is like the outline called a "cartoon," which an artist makes for a picture. It is a preliminary study only. This will serve as a stimulus and guide in further search for material, and it will aid in arranging such material as it is found in thinking and reading.

2. Make a first plan when considerable material has been gathered and before any detailed preparation of the sermon is undertaken. This is apparently the "syllabus" of which Robertson speaks (p. 4).

The method of Robertson finds confirmation in the counsel of R. W. Dale, who says: "You should have two plans: the first, a plan to guide your own thought while accumulating your material; the second, a plan for arranging the material when you have accumulated it."[1]

There are many cases in which the second plan will require such essential modification that you will make a third and even a fourth.

[1] *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, pp. 137, 139.

In other words, all plans of sermons must be so flexible that they may be modified the moment that the developing thought calls for change. No greater mistake could be made than to allow the plan to bring you into bondage at any point. It is always your servant and you must never become its slave.

It is necessary, therefore, to test the plan frequently. Especially after the second draft has been made, it will be profitable to submit the plan to the test of the six questions proposed by Dale:

1. Does it contain an adequate amount of positive Christian truth?

2. Have you recognized the true relations of men to God as these are defined in the revelation through Christ?

3. Does the sermon satisfy the apostolic conception of what preaching ought to be?

4. Will it achieve the great ends of the Christian ministry; and the specific end that you have in mind in this particular sermon?

5. Has it left anything unsaid that you as a preacher are bound to say?

6. Is the spirit of the sermon in harmony with the mind of Christ?[1]

Study these items carefully. Do these all seem accurate tests to apply to the plan? Should any be omitted? Should other items be added? If so, state them.

There are two fundamental principles which we find illustrated in our studies of plans:

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 142. It is a fair criticism of these tests that they are chiefly concerned with doctrine and almost wholly neglect the rhetorical and oratorical standards, which must have some place in the determination of the plan. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss the tests of Dale as suggested above.

1. *Progress of the discussion.*—Bushnell studies his introduction carefully; then he marshals three general proofs; then he brings forward five miscellaneous proofs, which are so arranged that they will reach their climax in the statement of personal influence, with Paul and Christ as examples; then he makes his applications personal and intimate, reaching a climax in the relations between the preacher and his congregation. Thus the *movement* of the discussion is constant.

In the case of Brooks and Beecher there is close similarity of plan; a brief discussion is followed by applications of the truth to various phases of life. In each case, however, the discussion shows constant progress in the thought.

The steady march of the thought in Chalmers is not lost in the well-managed repetitions that we found characteristic of his method. Spurgeon clearly intends to select the adverbs which outline his plan according to their cumulative meaning: *whence? what?* and *what for?* Newman's plan is definitely progressive.

So it is clear that an effective plan must be one in which each point is clearly stated, grows out of the point preceding, adds something to it, and prepares for the point to follow if there is one.

Such a test, applied constantly to every plan, would bring it to pass that no sermon would be like a pool, where the water remains stationary, but would be like a river, proceeding in its unhasting and unresting way to the attainment of its supreme purpose.

2. *Proportion of parts.*—This principle is exceedingly important and the plan must meet the exacting test of accurate distribution of both time and emphasis. The

following illustrations of the importance of this principle come from two preachers whose achievements in preaching lend weight to their words:

I once heard a sermon from a very able man on the hidings of God's power. These hidings, the preacher said, were to be found in history, in providence, and in grace. It took the preacher thirty minutes to find them in history, ten minutes to find them in providence, and three minutes to find them in grace.[1]

A sermon by a profound scholar was once preached in a New England church from the text, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound," and the preacher spent so much time showing how sin had abounded, through the centuries, and made such an appalling picture of it, that he was by no means able, in the few minutes devoted to the other phrase, to counteract the impression; so that his discourse, without his intending it, exactly contradicted his text, and left his hearers with the feeling that though grace has somewhat abounded, sin did always and everywhere exceedingly superabound.[2]

This is one of the faults apparent in the sermons of younger ministers, especially those who do not write their sermons. In the ardor of the discussion they give so much time to the less important points that they do not have the necessary time for those of greater weight. Writing the sermon and constant care in the delivery if the style is *ex tempore* are the most useful ways by which to avoid the danger.

**Textual and topical plans.**—The most general classification of plans is textual and topical. In the former the

[1] Tucker, *Making and Unmaking of the Preacher*, p. 100.

[2] Gladden, *The Christian Pastor*, 1907, p. 92.

development of the proposition follows the course of the thought in the text; that is, not only the subject but the plan is contained in the text. In the latter, the subject is suggested by the text, but the development of the discussion is determined by the preacher independent of the text.

Textual preaching is the easier. There is no difficulty in finding a plan; it is furnished at once by the text. It is reasonable to expect that the thought in the text will be most clearly and accurately expressed by the writer himself; therefore the textual plan has the weight of presumption in its favor. A textual plan is an aid to memory, since the memorizing of the text is equivalent to the memorizing of the plan.[1]

No better plan, for example, could be made for a sermon on II Tim. 4:6–8 than to follow the tenses of the verb and make the following divisions:

I. Present
   A. I am being poured out as a libation
   B. The hour of weighing anchor and unloosing sail has come

II. Past
   A. I have fought the beautiful battle
   B. I have run the race to a finish
   C. I have kept the faith

III. Future
   A. The crown of righteousness awaits me
   B. The just critic will bestow it
   C. All my comrades who love his appearing will share it

Topical plans, on the other hand, are more frequently used in the modern pulpit. They allow larger freedom

[1] Expository sermons are subject to the same rules as textual, the only difference being the length of the passage interpreted.

and give greater range to the preacher's inventive skill. Therefore they are more interesting. There is great danger, however, that they may become fanciful or illogical. In any case a preacher who is accustomed to using topical plans will find his work improved if he deliberately changes to the textual method, at least for one-fourth of the time. Especially at the beginning of his work a preacher would better hold rather steadily to the textual plan, working somewhat slowly into topical treatment. In short, it is best not to use either method exclusively. The method that insures the largest freedom and stimulates thought most deeply is the best.

Topical treatment of II Tim. 4:6–8 is possible; but it will test the inventive faculties. Criticize this plan:

I. The Factor of Struggle in Life
   Like all valiant and victorious souls, Paul was obliged to struggle for faith and character.

II. Aids in the Struggle
   The vision of the faith and the actual worth of the victory; the help of others who fight beside us; the energy of the living Christ.

III. The immortal Completion
   The completions of life that are withheld warrant their attainment somewhere; God does not mock his children by giving them the vision of the perfect and then denying them satisfaction.

Varieties of topical plans are seen in the case of Spurgeon, who uses the natural series of questions (the adverb method), and Brooks and Beecher, who give a brief discussion and follow it with applications (the deductive method).

## CHAPTER VIII

## SOURCES OF SERMON MATERIAL

**Range.**—The study of the eight sermons reveals such a range and wealth of material used in the discussions as puts to shame any flippant remark concerning the intellectual poverty of the preacher or the charge that preaching consists in "saying such an obvious thing in such a solemn way." It is impossible to study these sermons without gaining at the end profound respect for the mental resourcefulness and power of the preachers. The material from which effective sermons are constructed is drawn from every department of human thought and life. The preacher lays all the universe of truth under tribute. There is nothing of human concern that is foreign to him.

We are humbled and exalted by this survey of the sermon materials that these preachers have used. We feel the keen sense of joy as we are challenged to think, to read, to study as widely as the broad world of truth runs. Preaching is great business and no man is justified in undertaking it who is fearful of the exacting demands that are to be made upon him by his sermons. He is bound to be humbled at the same moment in which he is exalted. The first thought after the completion of the study may be, "This quest is not for me." These preachers were mighty men. The second thought is quite different. We feel assured and comforted. These men learned how to preach by preaching; their power

came gradually. They did not master their material or their technique in expression during the first year of their ministry. They found their way through their glorious world slowly. We dare to try to do the same, each in his own way and with the powers that the good God has given him.

**The preacher's own thinking.**—It is apparent that the large majority of the material used in these sermons has been gathered and arranged as the result of the preacher's own courageous and accurate thinking. This is felt in every sermon.

Robertson has pondered the great principle that the only way in which to become master of truth is to obey and to love. His study of Bacon and Jesus gave him this principle; he has thought it all through. His illustrations and arguments are convincing because he himself is convinced.

The splendid mental quality of Bushnell appears on every page. Here is the great pioneer of "Christian Nurture" giving conclusions for which he has wrestled as he has thought his problem through with all the equipment of his alert and disciplined mind. Bushnell is the thinker, unafraid and utterly honest.

Brooks and Newman are both doctrinal preachers, far apart in their conclusions, to be sure; but both found their sermons in certain great teachings which they have thought through. With Brooks it is the illuminating truth of the divine value of human life. "Men are the children of God." He has reasoned this out; he has found that it "worked" in his relations with men. He is bound to believe it in spite of sin and failure. This world belongs to God. It seems easy to affirm and to

preach this; but it is not so easy when Brooks makes the practical application of his truth.

Beecher may have decided to preach this particular sermon on Sunday morning, thereby setting a horrible example to all young preachers who think that this is the way to become Beechers; but the study of the sermon reveals the fact that he has been thinking for weeks and perhaps months on this very discourse. His interest in science, in theology, in life, has been guiding him to the acquisition of the material that he pours out in a torrent when the time comes for him to speak.

Chalmers has thought his psychological problem through, years before the modern schools arose to write books on the psychology of Christian experience. It is a mind of a high order that we see in action in the sermon that we study. He holds up his truth like a great diamond and lets the light flash from this facet and then from another; and the final blaze and splendor of color comes from a thinker who goes to the end of his subject.

Spurgeon is the evangelist. His sermon suffers in the matter of length and the order might be improved; but he is not simply shouting. He knows life. He has thought about it in the light of the doctrines that he steadfastly believes. He is Calvinist, biblicist, premillennarian. He is not a follower of mere blind trails, however. We may or may not agree with him; our mouths may not be opened very wide to sing the "sonnets" of election and predestination; but before the rugged honesty of Spurgeon's mind we must stand with respect.

Newman is also the disciple of authority. Robertson put them both into the same class with fine insight

(p. 6, ll. 32–38). Newman, however, has thought his doctrines through to his own satisfaction, even if he does not marshal evidences as those who dissent from him might like to have him do.

The delicate and convincing power of Ainsworth's thinking is one of the most striking impressions of the study. At first glance it might seem as if this short sermon did not call for any particular force or clarity of thought. Test it, however. It is easier to produce three minutes of Spurgeon than a minute of Ainsworth. There is a fine insight, accurate reasoning, real mental grip in Ainsworth.

This survey, made swiftly, brings us to the conclusion that the first source of sermon material is the result of the preacher's own thinking.[1]

**The preacher's essential theology.**—The primary material in the preacher's thinking is his conception of the Christian gospel or his essential theology. The doctrinal basis of the eight sermons appears as soon as they are carefully studied; it does not lie on the surface,

[1] The principle that the first source of material for a sermon is derived from the preacher's own thought, quite apart from anything that he reads on the subject, is well illustrated by the following from Roger W. Babson: "For instance, in raising a question for debate students invariably ask where they can find something written on the question? Let us assume that the question is, 'Resolved: that the Federal Government should own and operate the railways.' The usual method of procedure in preparing for such a debate is to read extensively. Few prefer a thinking process, although able to think clearly and well. Give a student a blank piece of paper and a pencil, then put him in a room alone with his thinking power. Tests show that the average advanced student, twenty-one years of age or over, can think out originally from fifty to seventy-five per cent of the pros and cons on the question, without reading a single line."—*Making Good in Business*, p. 33.

but every sermon rests upon a fundamental theology. This is most apparent in Newman; but it is precisely as real and potent in Bushnell and Chalmers. It determines the content of the discourse and finally guarantees its power. The preacher is by virtue of his work a theologian. Now and then we hear theology disparaged even by those who occupy pulpits. Preaching without theology would be as impossible as a messenger without a message. "Here I am, with nothing to say," would be a poor announcement for a herald at any time. What the preacher has to say is his gospel, his theology. It may come to expression as positively as it does in Newman; it may lie deeply under the sermon as it does in Bushnell and Robertson; it may be as delicately suggested as it is in Ainsworth; but it is the great source of thought and feeling and volitional appeal in every sermon.

Therefore, a word of counsel to all preachers is vital at this point. The preacher must master a theology. It must be his theology. It will probably be expressed as simply as it was by Bushnell; God in Christ. But it must be clear and positive and commanding. The way to master a theology is to preach it. The professor of Christian theology has the advantage of time and quietness in his work; but he misses the privilege of the preacher, who can see his theology verified day after day in the parish. Indeed, Christian theology at the beginning was wrought out by preachers; Paul is the great example. Christian theology is simply the formulation of the Christian experience; and this comes in fresh and vital forms constantly within the grasp of the pastor and preacher. Therefore Christian theology must be the main *body* of preaching. The preacher as scholar

and thinker exercises his powers in this field with peculiar advantages; his sources are not in books but in the unfolding life of the people day by day. It is the preacher who is the true "father of the church."

There is a vast difference between preaching Christian truth and dogmatic preaching. No preaching is worthy the Christian name that does not proclaim the Christian gospel, with every accent of certainty that the preacher can command. Disguised lectures in dogmatic theology are not sermons, although they are given texts and preached in churches. Men who believe the Christian gospel to be true and are sure that it is the sole solvent of the world's woes and the satisfaction of its profoundest hopes are doctrinal preachers and cannot be otherwise.

**The use of contemporary life.**—The Sermon Studies have shown that the eight preachers know the life of their time. They are specialists in the human soul. They know the psychology of the parish. They have been abroad among the people. The illustrations of their sermons come from the parish. They are like every true artist, fashioning their materials from the fertile and fascinating life around them.

> Not from a vain or shallow thought
> His awful Jove young Phidias wrought;
> Never from lips of cunning fell
> The thrilling Delphic oracle;
> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old;
> The litanies of nations came,
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
> Up from the burning core below,—
> The canticles of love and woe.[1]

[1] Emerson, "The Problem."

Thus the preacher finds among the people the suggestions of subjects, the material for discussion, the apt and forceful illustrations which keep his sermons in touch with life. Beecher is a conspicuous example of this principle and therefore his own words are especially significant: "A man may know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, he may know every theological treatise from the day of Augustine to the day of Dr. Taylor, and if he does not understand human nature, he is not fit to preach."[1]

**Material in history, biography, and literature.**—The sermons that we have studied do not carry any extensive examples of the use of material from these fields; yet it is apparent that the preachers are men who have made themselves at home in these large areas. Especially is this apparent in Bushnell. The range of his culture is exceedingly wide.

That literary field which is commonly known as the "literature of power" is the especial source of material for the preacher. There are certain books which have permanently influenced human thought and life. These are not merely the great devotional books,[2] but also such literary masterpieces as *Les Misérables*, which every preacher ought to read at least every five years, pondering and inwardly digesting its central teaching.

[1] Beecher, *Yale Lectures*, I, 85.

[2] Strangely enough, the field of devotional literature is seriously neglected by the modern preacher. Yet the finest flower and fruitage of Christian experience is to be found in the classics of Christian devotion. No better course of reading for a winter could be projected than to follow Atkins, *Pilgrims of the Lonely Road*, and become acquainted with the men and books to which he introduces his readers with fine insight and in beautiful style.

**All the universe as the source of sermon material.**— This apparently preposterous title is not so absurd as it appears at first glance. There must be the right sorting of material before it is used; but it may come from every quarter of life and may find its place in the sermon according to the beautiful laws of association that work quite unconsciously in the preacher's mind.

This has been put so well by Burton that it is profitable to hear him on the point. He describes how a subject has been chosen and has polarized the preacher's mind, so that he is in need of a great number of thoughts wherewith to make it clear, and then says:

> On reaching that crisis . . . . I go to my desk and my pen and my paper, and there sit waiting for thoughts. I open all my windows hospitably, so that if they want to come in they can. And they almost always want to. Somehow they hear that I am there. Why do all the winds of heaven pour down towards a vacuum? Why do all the birds of heaven pour down through zones and zones seeking the summer? Why do all the waters of the world drift toward any hollow anywhere? And why does all heaven move towards beseeching souls? No matter why. So it is, and that is enough. And it is enough for me to know that somehow my waiting mind there in my study is universally advertised, and excites a universal good will towards me, so that my windows are filled with inflocking thoughts, according (I am compelled to say) to the size and what not of my mind.[1]

Of course, one would not be so foolish as to take this paragraph too literally. There is a vast difference between mere reverie, the sweet dawdling of the mind, and real thinking, which is harder work than sawing

[1] "Pulpit and Parish," *Yale Lectures*, p. 49.

wood with a dull saw. One might wait longer than Burton was obliged to do for the flock to arrive, and at best only a single bird might come in at the open windows. On one day the response might be slower than on another. This, however, does not invalidate the point that Burton makes, namely, that preaching lays under tribute all the possible resources of the universe. That sermon of ours is to be the greatest and noblest message that can be spoken through human lips; it is to be worthy of a contribution from any age or area of life. Of the preacher it may truly be said, "All things are yours."

## CHAPTER IX

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Purpose and importance of illustrations in sermons.**— An illustration is any fact, incident, or figure that is used to make clear an analogous truth. It is not proof. Reasons have been called the pillars and walls of a discourse, while the illustrations are the windows that let in the light. In using illustrations we take it for granted that the universe is one, and therefore we may confidently try to understand one part by means of another. The chief forms of illustration are metaphors, similes, comparisons, examples, anecdotes, and stories. Spurgeon gives seven purposes in the use of illustration: to secure attention and create interest; to make truth lifelike and vivid; to explain; to give genuine aid to the reasoning powers; to aid the memory; to give pleasure to the audience by arousing fine emotion; to get hold of the inattentive and careless. Find in the Sermon Studies examples that justify each of these purposes. Suggest other uses of illustrations.

Brooks says (*Lectures and Preaching*, p. 175): "And so I think that we confine too much the office of illustration if we give it only the duty of making truth clear to the understanding, and do not also allow it the privilege of making truth glorious to the imagination." Recalling the illustration of the light in Bushnell (p. 24, l. 119 to p. 25, l. 146) and Brooks (p. 44, l. 46), show whether or not these preachers met the second demand indicated above.

**Dangers in the use of illustrations.**—The first danger is the tendency to use illustrations too freely. An effective illustration is a fascinating thing; it lays hold of the imagination; it is easy and pleasant to use. Without great caution the preacher lets the illustration run away with him; his house becomes all window. A sermon must never become a series of illustrations and stories strung on the tenuous line of a text.

On the other hand, warned by the danger just noted, preachers tend to give up the use of illustrations, and so their sermons become formal and cold. There is a golden mean to find and follow. At least one illuminating figure for each sermon point is a safe rule. But it must not be uniformly followed.

The dangers in the use of illustrations are self-evident. Two only need be noted:

1. The familiar sentence declares, *No illustration can walk on all fours.* That is, at some point every figure will break down if its meaning is pressed to the very limits. There is just one central meaning which may be brought out safely; to press the details into service is to suffer final disaster. Recall the suggestion from Brooks (p. 46, l. 133).

2. The illustrations are, for this reason, often the most vulnerable part of the sermon. A clever opponent may turn an illustration whose essential point is not well chosen or which is pressed too far into an argument in rebuttal. If his illustration refutes rather than proves his point the preacher is defeated.

**Principal sources of illustrations.**—The Sermon Studies have shown how wide is the range and how different the methods employed in sermon illustration.

Newman and Ainsworth use practically no illustrations; they hammer away at their argument or explanation. Spurgeon bursts out with a paragraph that is almost too vivid. The best example of effective use of illustrations is Brooks. His notebooks are filled with suggestions for illustrations. In the *Life and Letters* (first edition in two volumes), II, 357–67, are the following:

There are days which seem to be made up of spring and autumn, which have the hope of one and the despair of the other. Our time is like such a day.

The mosaic work, whose pieces being long they can cut the mass at various points and find the same figure or face less a quarter in size, but keeping the same expression. So perhaps in various ages of history.

As the one test of a well-tied knot is that it shall be so tied that the more strain is put upon it the stronger it holds.

As when you fling your window up on the crowded street it seems as if the noises then began.

The way in which each speaker in a play must make the situation ready for the player who is to follow him, prepare for his speech or action.

Like the bear in his disgraceful humiliation begging for nuts.

This shows how the mind of the preacher was constantly active in gathering material for illustrations. Many of these were doubtless never used; but some of them lay at hand as occasion demanded their use.

1. The Bible is one of the most frequent sources from which illustrations may be drawn. It is still better known to the majority of the congregation than any

other book. The preacher is also more familiar with it than with any other single source. It furnishes the persons, the episodes, and the vital expressions of religion in action that are needed for sermon illustration. The great preachers have been masters in the use of biblical material in this way. We recall the manner in which Brooks used the scene from the life of the Prodigal Son (p. 57, l. 506). Also Robertson's use of Paul (p. 9, l. 134).

2. The daily experiences in the parish are another fertile source of illustrations. Bushnell and Brooks both avail themselves of such material with great discrimination and skill. Beecher, however, was especially expert in the use of such material. The following incident is an example of this:

One of his parishioners saw him one Saturday on a Brooklyn ferry-boat watching her push her way to the dock; and he said, "I'll see what he has to say about that tomorrow." Sure enough, in the morning sermon on "The Foundations of Faith" he said, "As I was coming across from New York yesterday I observed that, as the boat forced her way into the narrow basin, the timbers on either side gave way, once and again, but always righted themselves. So it is with the great fundamental truths; they may bend and yield but never to the breaking point. The essential things are grounded forever."[1]

Such illustrations, coming with freshness and vitality out of the actual life of the parish, bear with great force upon the minds of those who hear them.[2] If the preacher

[1] Quoted in Burrell, *The Sermon*, p. 226.

[2] "The preacher is a pastor. His social life may be his choice. His pastorate is of his duties. His shoes are his pulpit. If to like it is not natural, he is to learn."—Tilroe, *Sent Forth*, p. 21.

bears into his parish work a mind charged with a number of sermon subjects he is bound to find more illustrations than he can use effectively.

3. The physical world is one of the richest mines for this treasure. Jesus was the consummate master of short illustrations from nature. He seldom used the history of his people; but he was at home with the flowers, the sparrows, the sky, and the lake. The great preachers have been adepts in the use of illustrations from the natural world. In using this material the danger is that the preacher will either select an inappropriate example or that he will use it at too great length. There is a remarkable example of the accurate and concise use of an illustration from nature in Tennyson's "Guinevere," in *Idylls of the King*, in which he describes the results of the experience of Modred when Launcelot caught him spying on the queen and her maids from the top of a garden wall, plucked him "like a green worm" from the masonry and hurled him into the dust.

> But ever after, the small violence done
> Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
> As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
> A little bitter pool about a stone
> On the bare coast.

No illustration could be more appropriate for the spirit that is cherishing a hatred and is beaten into a bitter flurry by it all day long. Every item is accurate and illuminating. The wind is *sharp;* the pool is *little* and *bitter* and lies where the retreating tide has made a place for it *beside a hard stone;* the action goes on *all day*, never letting up its whipping; the coast is *bare*, like the petty and embittered life that fits into it.

Details must be repressed. Note the following:

What Mount Blanc as the king of the Alps is, lifting its crystal domes and towers 15,781 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea, compared with the other snow-clad and cloud-kissed mountains of the Alps, that Jesus Christ is compared with the loftiest men who have risen as mountain heights above their fellows through all the ages.

The detail of the accurate height of the mountain is a distracting factor; it implies either an unusual accuracy of verbal memory or else leaves the suggestion that the preacher consulted the encyclopedia and displayed his erudition unnecessarily.

It requires accurate discrimination and delicate skill to select and use an illustration with such effectiveness as this: "Do not think there is security in partial worldliness, in a moderate compromise. We do not need to wear the entire dress of a smallpox victim in order to acquire the disease. A bit of ribbon will do it!"

4. The preacher's general reading and study in history, biography, and literature furnish a wide range of material for illustrations. In no case will these be used unless they are clearly understood. References to books that the people have not read, to events about which they do not know, are unwise. The preacher must never allow the impression to prevail that he is the one learned man in the community and is parading the fact in his preaching.

These are only a few of the fields from which illustrations may be drawn; in the previous chapter it has been shown that the whole range of human life is the source of sermon material.

**Principles.**—The following brief summary of the principles governing the use of illustrations is derived from the Sermon Studies and such other examples as are available:

1. *Economy and restraint.*—In general use only one illustration to a point; but note the crowded paragraph in Spurgeon (p. 132, l. 306). When three illustrations are available, use only one and be sure that this lets in the light.

2. *Unity of central idea.*—Mere *resemblance* is not enough. There must be actual unity of thought between the illustration and the truth illustrated. Breed shows how a student, preaching from Prov. 1:10, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," proposed to illustrate his subject by the use of the rat trap. The disparity between a good man trapping vermin and an evil man trying to destroy innocent souls is apparent. Happily this was a student practicing rather than preaching; but mistakes as atrocious are sometimes made by ordained men.

3. *Hold to the one central point.*—This has been stressed already.

4. *Subordination.*—The tendency of the forceful illustration is to become so conspicuous that it alone is seen and the truth which it is designed to clarify is actually obscured by neglect. This is the difference between a cathedral window which we look at and a living-room window which we look through. No figure is an end in itself; it exists wholly for the truth of the sermon.

5. *Blending.*—By this we mean such literary handling of the illustration as will make it an actual part of the sermon and not a detail which is lugged in or stuck on.

In looking at an exhibition of water-color pictures of marine subjects an observer said, "I am anxious about those boats: I am afraid they are going to fall out of the composition." It was perfectly clear that the boats had been painted *on* but not *into* the picture.

So illustrations must fit into the composition of the sermon and no fear must be felt that they are going to fall out of the sermon, thus destroying its essential unity.

The following is an example of this principle:

> What do we mean by lowliness? . . . . Perhaps if we call to our mind the figure of a carpet or of a rug, we may be near to the New Testament conception of the word. When the carpets are up in the house there is a sense of general forlornness and discomfort. The hollow sounds in the house make the home sepulchral. When things are put straight again how comforting it is to have the carpets down. Or recall the comfort which the use of a rug gives to one in journeying. Or call to mind how refreshing it is to leave the hard dusty highway, where your feet have become weary and sore, and to turn on to the fringe of grass which now carpets the wayside. All these figures will lead us to the central suggestion of the meaning of lowliness. It is the laying down of one's sympathies and affections, and making as it were a carpet or rug of them that the chills and pains of the world may be removed.

6. *Dignity and strength.*—By this we do not mean that only the ornate and sublime must be sought. The homely and simple figures that Jesus used are both strong and dignified. So many times the congregation gains the impression that somehow the preacher was weak and petty in his use of illustration. It was not

worthy of the truth or of the occasion. Little anecdotes and trivial remarks are used, to the disparagement of the whole subject. Make every illustration worth while.

7. *Beauty.*—This calls for little comment. The whole sermon must be beautiful as well as true and strong. Anything that borders in the least on the coarse and ugly has no place in a sermon.

8. *Freshness.*—Illustrations tend to go the rounds and to be worn thin in the process. For years the reply of the wounded soldier to the surgeon who was probing, "A little deeper and you will find the emperor," was current in the pulpit of England and America. It became trite. New fields must be explored in the search for the figures that will add force and beauty to the sermon. Note one like this: "It is the tumult of the sea that sets the fog-bell going; it is the tumult in the religious soul that makes it aware of its own reality and wild melodious cry."

9. *Picturesqueness and vividness.*—Fresh illustrations are quite generally of this sort. Color and movement make an illustration effective. A vivid picture always makes a deep and clear impression. This is seen in the paragraph from Spurgeon to which attention has been called before (p. 132, l. 306).

10. *Accuracy.*—Spurgeon told his students that the moment he had any suspicion concerning the exact truth of any illustration he rejected it. Anecdotes are often passed on, gaining in color and incident as they proceed, until at last they have passed the bounds of accuracy. No preacher will play fast and loose with the complete truthfulness of his material. This applies to form as well as to content.

The fierce light of the last day will, however, reveal these hidden things of insignificance, and picture them in large characters on the great white throne, as minute life is disclosed on the screen of the naturalist.

The illustration above is an exact quotation from a published sermon. The figure comes from the use of the stereopticon; it is therefore modern and vivid. But apparently the screen is on a throne, or else the throne is used in place of a screen. The jumble is not in good taste.

## CHAPTER X

## TRANSITIONS

**Importance.**—It has been said that it is easy to get the *heads* of a sermon; it is not very difficult to get the *body;* the real problem is the *neck*. The point at which many a sermon breaks is the connection between points and paragraphs. Transition is vital to a sermon. Therefore we have made this one of the definite sections in the Work Sheet. The result of the study of the eight reports is as follows.

**Variety.**—The Sermon Studies show that all kinds of devices and lack of them may be expected in sermons. Brooks and Bushnell work with extreme care to carry the thought of the hearer from point to point by the use of some word or phrase that will transfer one surely and smoothly. Newman is an equally accurate craftsman. Beecher, trusting the devices of the orator, does not pay much attention to the rhetorical means of transition. Ainsworth has no paragraphs and therefore offers little in the way of suggestion. Therefore, again we note how wide is the variety of technique in the case of preachers who have been among the outstanding masters of their art.

**Means used.**—The first device is the use of a connective word. These are the familiar conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs which would naturally be employed to show relations of paragraphs, and therefore effect easily and logically the transition of the hearer's thought.

The principal words and the number of times they are used are as follows: *but*, fourteen; *now*, fourteen; *then*, eleven; *too* and *also*, nine; *again*, seven; *thus*, four; *therefore*, three. There are many similar words that are used a less number of times. In the written sermon there is less danger of falling into the habitual use of such words than in the *ex tempore* style. For example, extemporaneous speakers fall easily into the habit of making the majority of their thought transitions by the use of the word "now" or "now then." If the sermon is carefully written a larger variety of words will be chosen.

The second method of effecting smooth and convincing transitions of thought is to use some word or phrase near the end of the paragraph that will look forward to being taken up in the beginning of the next paragraph, thus making the connection of the thought clear and close. Brooks gives us many examples of this. Turn to page 43, the close of the first paragraph and the beginning of the second:

> Such *words* of Jesus are like spheres of crystal into which the world is gathered, and where the past and future, the small and great, may all be read.
>
> It seems to me as if there were days on which we wanted to set one of these comprehensive *words* of Christ before our eyes and study it.

Here the transition of the thought is accomplished in two ways, each of which is exquisitely handled: (1) There is the carrying out of the figure of the crystal, every item of which is brought out and stressed with accurate discrimination, and (2) there is the repetition of the term itself, "words," which makes the change of

thought from the general to the more specific immediate and convincing.

This is a single example of the workmanship of a preacher who aims at making his discussion move accurately and smoothly from point to point.

Then come all the phrases such as "in the first place," "let us consider next," "we pass now to discuss." In the cultivation of his technique the preacher must furnish his mind and memory with a considerable number and a wide variety of such terms as these, making sure that he does not repeat himself and that he never limits himself to a pet phrase. The best way in which to acquire a stock of these phrases is to study the literary style of the best masters in English and consciously attempt to fix in memory the most effective of their terms.

Finally, there are the oratorical devices, which cannot be placed in the printed sermon, but which are used by preachers like Beecher. Physical movements in changing posture or the use of gesture, variations in tone, changes in pitch and inflection of voice, are all useful and effective means by which the thought of hearers may be carried from point to point and stages in the discussion clearly indicated.

**Patience in practice.**—Skill in the effecting of transitions will not come at once. It is a part of the preachers' skill which must be worked for diligently and long. It takes practice and patience to achieve a high degree of effectiveness. The only way to win is to recognize the necessity of carrying the congregation with you in the discussion and then practicing the art of transition with tireless patience.

## CHAPTER XI

## UNITY

**Necessity of unity in the sermon.**—No discussion is required to justify the statement that an effective sermon must be unified by the consistency of its purpose, materials, and method of treatment. If it fails in this respect it loses its power to validate its truth. A sermon must not be like a string of beads, held together merely by the string. A sermon is not a series of pious rambling remarks on a religious subject. Every sermon must have a definite purpose, be concerned with a specific subject, progress steadily toward the climax. Therefore it must be unified.

**Principles derived from the Sermon Studies.**—The first general conclusion is that all the sermons are well unified. In spite of its apparent lack of structure, Ainsworth has brought the reflections on his great subject into almost perfect unity of explanation, proof, and persuasion. There are only minor defects in Robertson's plan. Spurgeon ranges widely but never far afield from his announced line of development. Beecher is most open to criticism for loose logical structure, but he makes up for any possible weakness by the steadiness of his purpose and his oratorical glow. Bushnell, Brooks, Chalmers, and Newman are admirable examples of unified discourse.

From the Studies it appears that we may look for unity in a sermon under at least three heads.

1. *The preacher's purpose.*—While we cannot enter fully into the conscious mental purposes of these eight preachers, it is safe to affirm that each one of them sets out deliberately to accomplish a certain result. Robertson earnestly desires to show that there is one way in which to come into the mastery of Christian truth, which is by obedience to the truth that is already known. Bushnell sets out to prove that the mightiest forces in our moral and spiritual environment are exerted without deliberate intention. Brooks is so committed to a great religious doctrine, and finds in the figure of light such a consummate expression of it, that he undertakes to affirm the truth and apply it to life with energetic directness. Beecher has such a personal conviction of the central meaning of Christ in human experience that he flames forth in oratorical expression of it. Newman, sharing the same certainty, undertakes to prove that Christ is the incarnate Son of God by an appeal to the creeds and Scripture; his method is therefore entirely different from that of Beecher, although his essential purpose is the same. Chalmers, like Bushnell and Robertson, has mastered a profound spiritual principle, and he endeavors to demonstrate it, with a strong command of the psychological materials involved. Spurgeon knows the plain people, with all their weight of care under the burden of the day; he wants to comfort them and set them singing under the load; so he throws his whole heart into his message. Ainsworth does the same, briefly and beautifully, in sharp distinction as to materials and method, but with complete identity of purpose.

In every case this purpose gives its essential unity to the sermon. When we start out to do something we

must use those materials, adopt those methods, employ those illustrations—those and no others—which will make for the successful achievement of the purpose we have defined. The unity of the sermon is made or destroyed by this purpose, always present to guide and sustain the preacher preparing his sermon. The reaffirmation of his purpose may not always save him from digressions and obscurities; but there is no other single safeguard so trustworthy as this. When we find ourselves getting mixed up or losing our aim, we should stop short and ask ourselves, "What am I driving at?" In almost every case the answer will set us going again. Does the argument, the illustration, the appeal help us in the realization of the purpose of the sermon? Then, go on. If not, stop and change.

2. *The preacher's materials.*—The preacher's purpose governs him in the selection or rejection of the materials at hand. The final arrangement must consist of materials that are related and unified. Phelps classifies all materials under four heads: explanation, illustration, argument, persuasion.[1]

Leaving aside for the moment the correctness of his proposition, it is apparent that here is a fine test of sermon unity so far as it involves materials. Undoubtedly all four factors may be found in every sermon; they appear especially in those constructed according to the

[1] "Explanation, illustration, argument, persuasion are all that exist of rhetorical material and method with which [we have] to deal. One or more of these four things must be done in all good discourse; and in such discourse nothing else can be done. When you have exhausted these four elements of speech, you have exhausted all the resources of speech. This classification, therefore, includes all the variety of which rational discourse is susceptible."—*Theory of Preaching*, p. 36.

classic model. Therefore the test of any paragraph or unit of thought is: Does it explain, prove, illustrate, or persuade? Does it do this effectively and better than anything else at hand for the particular purpose dominant at the moment? Unity of materials will be secured when the treatment is managed in this way.

3. *The preacher's technique.*—The method of handling materials must be unified. That is, technique must be consistent. Compare the dogmatic assurance of Newman and Spurgeon. One is as intense as the other. They are, of course, utterly at variance in their superficial expressions of certainty; but both are dogmatic to the highest degree.[1]

When it comes to technique, however, the Protestant orator of the Tabernacle and the Catholic theologian of St. Mary's, Oxford, are poles apart. Each sermon is consistent and characteristic throughout. Imagine the two preachers exchanging material and method in midstream! Which means simply that every preacher must work out his own technique, be freely consistent in its use, and produce unified sermons in this way.[2]

**Unity in variety.**—In saying that the sermon must carry through the same subject we do not mean sameness in the treatment of the subject. The ideal, variety in unity and unity in variety, obtains in the sermon. A wide range of variety is perfectly consistent with unity. It is such diversity as we see, for example, in the human

[1] This is true to a large extent also in the case of Brooks.

[2] Vinet says that there are two kinds of unity: logical and psychological. A sermon on Rom. 12:1 would have logical unity, closely reasoned, precise; a sermon on II Pet. 1:5–7 would be unified by the common spirit that binds the eight virtues together and makes of them not a catalogue, but a consistent whole.

body, where the organism is made up of organs of many kinds. The harmonizing principle is that of function. So long as each organ is contributing its proper gift to the organism, the matter of its identical character in comparison with another organ is without significance. So the sermon may carry explanations, arguments, illustrations, and appeals of the greatest variety, provided only that each and all contribute to the realization of the purpose of the sermon. Sameness becomes weariness; variety in unity lightens the discourse and makes it convincing and effective.

## CHAPTER XII

## STYLE

**Method of study.**—In the Work Sheet the seven qualities of style are given as they are indicated in Phelps, *English Style in Pulpit Discourse.* In the following paragraphs we shall define these qualities in the terms which Phelps uses. After discussing the examples of these qualities as revealed by the Sermon Studies we shall make suggestions as to the way in which the preacher is to seek to cultivate his style.

**Definition.**—"Style is the general term by which we designate the qualities of thought as expressed in language."[1] That is, the style inheres in the thought as it is expressed and not in the words which are used in expressing it. Therefore Phelps adds: "Style *is* thought. Qualities of style are qualities of thought. Forms of style are thought in form."

**Qualities of style.**—These are given under seven heads by Phelps. Wendell reduces them to three: clearness, force, and elegance. If the first and second of Phelps are placed under clearness and the sixth and seventh are taken as additions to Wendell, we have correspondence in classification between the two writers.

[1] *English Style,* etc., pp. 2, 6. See also Barrett Wendell, *English Composition,* p. 4: "*Style* . . . . means simply the expression of thought or emotion in written words; it applies equally to an epic, a sermon, a love-letter, an invitation to an evening party." Brunetière said: "Style is one's manner of expressing oneself."

1. *Purity.*—In pure style the thought is clothed in English words, construed according to the laws of English grammar, with the words employed in the sense that is sanctioned by good usage. Good usage is a somewhat indefinite term. Brewster gives three standards: it is *present* and *national* and *reputable.*[1] The frequent gibe, "I speak English, but I understand American," does not worry one who knows that the national standard has complete right to existence and is valid. The matter of reputable usage must be settled by the writer himself. It is not difficult, however, to determine what may fairly be called reputable; it is such usage as we find consistently employed by those who are by common consent the masters of the clearest and most forceful diction. A writer's position, rated by the books written, the quality of publications, and the general standing of the author may be determined with sufficient accuracy to render the standard definite.

2. *Precision.*—It is another term for exactness; and it means that quality of thought expressed in words by which it conveys "no more, no less, and no other" than precisely what the author meant. It is not the same as clearness, as will be seen by the self-evident fact that a sentence may be precise and yet not clear. If the author himself was confused, and expresses, therefore, a confused or obscure thought, the expression may be precise but still obscure. The test of precision is one that the writer must apply to himself; it is exceedingly difficult, for example, to apply it to the thought of a writer or speaker as we read or hear it, unless we know what his thought actually was. As a standard for use

[1] *English Composition and Style*, p. 179.

in the actual work of thinking and writing, precision is most valuable. We ought to test every sentence by the searching questions: Does this actually convey the thought that I had in mind? Will it be an accurate expression to others, even if it is to me? At this point we pass into a study of clarity in style.

3. *Clearness.*—It is that quality of thought expressed in words by which it immediately becomes plain in meaning to the hearer or reader. Quintilian called it the greatest excellence in discourse. Certainly no other quality is more desirable in preaching than clearness. If the people do not know what the preacher meant to say they have been cheated. We ought to consider the fact that, if a hundred persons give each a half-hour of time to listening to a sermon, fifty hours have been placed at the disposal of the preacher, more than six days of time estimated at the eight-hour day. No man has a right to use up this sacred time with obscure or mumbled preaching. Every word, every sentence, every paragraph ought to be clear as daylight, so that no hearer is left guessing. Thought must be clear to the preacher before it can be clearly expressed in written or spoken form. The greatest compliment that a hearer can pay a preacher is to say, "I understand you."

4. *Energy or force.*—Phelps does not attempt to define energy in style. He says that we understand it best by reflecting upon the synonyms for it. In nature we are sensitive to the facts of force, strength, vigor. We feel them.

We can only say that energy is a peculiar kind of impressiveness; it is the impressiveness of strength as distinct from that of clearness; it is the impressiveness of force as distinct

from that of beauty; it is the impressiveness of vigor as distinct from that of vivacity.[1]

The listener or reader senses this quality in a moment. Current and slangy speech calls this "punch" and "pep." Unfortunately it is often connected with the activities of the vocal and pulpit-pounding acrobat. We do not mean this false form of energy. We mean rather the thinking and then the writing or preaching of the man who is alive to his finger tips with his subject.

5. *Beauty.*—This is the quality of thought as expressed in words which conveys the sense of order, harmony, and loveliness. We are often told that it is quite enough to have made thought clear and forceful; but it is not enough. There is an innate craving for beauty in every listener. The true preacher, working under even the most forbidding conditions, knows that he must turn out a beautiful product. It ought not to be necessary to appeal for beauty in modern preaching; but it is.

This quality of style appears in the great preachers in a conspicuous degree. It is not a confession of weakness or sentimentality to say that a sermon is beautiful. Two examples of varying types of beauty in preaching are George A. Gordon and John Henry Jowett.[2] Passages taken almost at random from their published sermons show the exquisite quality of their craftsmanship. South is another example.[3] His sentences are beautiful in form and finish. Many elements enter into the composition of beauty in English style;

[1] Phelps, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

[2] See *Revelation and the Ideal* and *Brooks by the Traveller's Way.*

[3] *World's Great Sermons*, II, 221.

but it may instantly be felt and it wins favor for the truth when ugliness of any sort loses the verdict for the preacher.

6. *Naturalness.*—The definition of Phelps is admirable. He says: "Naturalness is that quality by which style expresses the fitness of language to thought, of both thought and language to the speaker, and of thought, language, and speaker to the hearer." In other words, the whole thing is a fit, "snug as an old shoe." There are three violations of naturalness: the holy tone, the distant manner, and the abstracted relation. All those words which have become conventional and all those tones which are assumed for the moment by the preacher are the enemies of naturalness. A young preacher, in a high and artificial tone, once delivered himself of this ponderous utterance: "Daniel Webster, in the solemn moment immediately preceding his dissolution," when what he really meant to say was, "just before he died." It is a strange fact that the moment a preacher begins to speak in the pulpit he tends to assume a voice and a vocabulary that are wholly unnatural and that he never would use in talking with people on common occasions. The pulpit may become the enemy of a natural style. It tends to elevate and to separate. The preacher throws down his truth from on high to the people; it is utterly false.[1]

[1] Rainsford has the following sensible counsel on this point: "This being unnatural is the great secret of loss of power in the pulpit; as soon as men stand in the pulpit things change; there are certain things they feel they must not say—unfortunately often the best things they have to say—their convictions must be toned down, very often just the convictions they do not want to be toned down; they must trim their words and leave out their most vital illustrations."—*A Preacher's Story of His Work*, p. 193.

7. *Individuality.*—This means simply that the true preacher infuses himself into his style. This was the meaning of Buffon's statement, "Style is the man himself." Others have said, "Style is character." The whole man speaks in the sermon.

We feel this in all the Sermon Studies. It is a subtle quality; but it lies deeply imbedded in the very structure of the sermon. No one of these preachers thinks like any other. Newman stands out clearly in contrast not only with Spurgeon, but also with Bushnell. Ainsworth never could be confused with Brooks. Your style must fit yourself. If it is a mere imitation of someone else, it is a pitiful failure.

**Cultivation of style.**—Certain gifts come to the preacher by birthright; others are gained at the price of labor and ceaseless vigilance. Those fortunate souls who are endowed with facility in expression are never released from the obligation to labor on their style; and those who struggle with scanty gifts at the beginning ought to be confident that the rewards of labor will be manifest in time. We can learn how to write and speak well, however handicapped at first. Let that be the assurance with which we work. The secret of success is work and practice; then work and practice; then still more work and still more practice. No clearer statement of the solution of the problem ever has been made than by the gracious master of style, Albert J. Lyman, in the words: "The best way to acquire a fine style is to develop a fine soul and then pour out the whole of it in one's preaching."[1]

[1] *Preaching in the New Age*, p. 41.

Practice in clear thinking begins with ourselves. Mud in the sermon comes from a muddy mind in the preacher. Deal with your own understanding. Ask such questions as these: Do I understand this truth myself? Do I see its relations clearly? Many a hazy point would never be projected at an audience if the preacher had first cleared himself completely. Abraham Lincoln was an example of the fundamental method by which clearness is secured; he never would try to state a point until he had bounded it on all sides and understood it fully.[1]

Then it is necessary to work with tireless devotion on the mastery of the English language. We need to exalt our conception of the nobility and worth of our own mother-tongue. We tend to undervalue that which we know best and handle day by day. We exalt the value of the classics, and formerly Hebrew and Greek were considered requisites for the trained preacher. Preaching, however, is done in English, in the great language of our fathers, in the noble speech of the masters of the British and American pulpits. Dale spoke so earnestly and truly on this point that his words deserve quotation here:

> Let me remind you . . . . that your language is one of the noblest and most precious parts of that inheritance which you have received from a great ancestry. It is the living and glorious monument of the thought, the endurance, the achievements, and the sorrows of many generations. It has been created by the affections and by the toil of the common people, by the genius of orators and poets, by the

[1] See Davis, *Preaching by Laymen*, p. 107, and Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, II, 43.

speculations of philosophers, by the devotion of saints. It is a legacy from your remote forefathers in the German forests whose virtues are celebrated by the severest of Roman historians. It preserves some of the most costly treasures of ancient civilizations. It is the fruit of long years of patient industry, of cruel wars, of voyages in strange seas, and of travels in strange lands. It is yours, but all the citizens of this great commonwealth have a property in it.[1]

Along with this respect for the worth of English must go wide reading and constant writing. In the midst of the parish pressure the modern preacher is sorely tempted to remit his study and reading. Mere hand-to-mouth provision for the sermon needs of pitilessly recurring Sundays will not answer. Planning, thinking, study, specific sermon preparation are imperative. More writing is absolutely necessary for the preacher who is to meet the needs of the day. The Sermon Studies reveal this principle clearly. These sermons were worked out by various methods; but they show care and labor. There is no easier path possible to the efficient preacher.

**Sermon writing and mastery of style.**—Therefore the surest way in which to master a fine style is through the long and often irksome discipline of writing sermons. This is so expensive in respect to time and labor that younger preachers especially tend to overlook or neglect it. There is no other way, however, by which a preacher ever can become the possessor of noble English style.

At the beginning of the preacher's work the whole sermon ought to be written. Not less than ten years of

[1] *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, p. 179.

such rigid practice will suffice; and writing may never safely be abandoned.

Note that this does not mean that the sermon as written is to be taken into the pulpit and read. It may or may not be so used. We are discussing the practice of habitual and painstaking sermon-writing entirely apart from the method of sermon delivery.

It is the universal experience of preachers who have been faithful to the task of writing that it grows easy and pleasant with practice. The use of the typewriter has greatly reduced the drudgery of writing sermons. The craft is subject to the law that obtains in all others: We like best that which we do best, and we do best that which we like best. The way, therefore, in which we may most successfully achieve real pleasure in sermon-writing is to begin and to continue writing sermons well. It is a comforting fact that power is gained in action. Such gains of skill and happiness will come to those who keep everlastingly at it in writing week after week on their sermons.

**Sermon delivery.**—This does not come within the province of our discussion, which has had in view the preparation of the sermon as a literary product. There are three ways in which the sermon may be delivered: from the written manuscript (reading style); from the memorized manuscript (*memoriter* style); from scanty or no notes, having made most careful preparation of *material* but leaving the *words* to come at the moment (extemporaneous style). Relatively few can use the second method. The first is not desired in the majority of congregations; it may be used for a time or occasion-

ally, with the deliberate intention of the preacher to work out of it into the third method. The last is the best. It means simply that the preacher knows just what he means to say; but he does not know precisely the words that he will use to say it. The extemporaneous style does not imply less preparation, but rather more. The time consumed in memorization may be put upon preparation. Many sentences and even whole paragraphs will occur to the extemporaneous preacher from his written sermon; but he will not rely upon memory. His sermon will be a message, and he will be sure that he is a messenger, with the prophetic fire burning within him and the confidence of the ambassador sustaining him in his utterance.

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